ENTERTAINMENT / G1 **BUSINESS** / B1 **WORLD** / A28 **WORLD** / A28

Marry a Filipino, Matt Monro advised his son

DMCI group, Metro Pacific Holdings win bid for $447.23-M government stake in Maynilad

Military overthrows Fiji government, ousts prime minister

Controversial US envoy to the United Nations quits

How 2 men escaped from Catanduanes

By Cyril L. Bonalberio
Inquirer Research

ARCHITECT AND HIS SUBCONTRACTOR LEFT Metro Manila for Virac, Catanduanes, on Nov. 27 with one goal in mind—to supervise the construction of a house for Catholic priests.

Little did they know the biggest challenge they would have to face was returning home alive.

VIEW | PAGE A11

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, December 6, 2006 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 361 P18 newsinfo.inquirer.net

Man, 2 sons adrift for 18 hours saved by boat seat

By Jeb B. Belen
Inquirer Southern Luzon

TABACO CITY—A WOODEN SEAT FROM A wrecked motorboat kept three boys afloat while adrift at sea saved a municipal councilor, his two sons and a staff when Super typhoon "Reming" hit the island municipality of Rapu-Rapu, Albay.

Councilor Noel Dagol, 55, his sons Jayson, 28,

MAN, 2 SONS | A11

Velarde vows to stop Con-ass; House changes rule

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Michael Lim Ubac

VELARDE to mobilize members

REP. PRIMO MIGUEL C. VELARDE, MARIANO "Mike" Velarde vowed to block the Charter change (Cha-cha) train without the Senate on board even as Malacañang's allies in the House of Representatives attack claim a rule providing for a two-chamber action on proposals to revise the Constitution.

"The people won't allow it and I, for one, will be openly against it," the leader of the Catholic charismatic movement with 4 million followers said of the House move to convene a Senate-less constituent assembly (Con-ass) to change the Constitution.

Velarde warned that a Con-ass without the Senate—many of whose members oppose it—would create a constitutional crisis.

"I don't think the Senate will take it sitting down," he said in an interview with the Inquirer the other day.

Sweeping aside objections from opposition lawmakers and using their overwhelming numbers, the House majority last night removed a major stumbling block to the convening of the Con-ass, if possible, starting today.

With powerful Malacañang backing, the House majority aims to dismantle the 19-year-old Constitution which provides for a presidential form of government and set up a parliamentary (unicameral) system that would, in effect, abolish the Senate along with the House.

By a 161 to 25 vote, with no abstentions, the majority changed House Rule 5 by striking out its second sentence which reads: "The adoption of resolutions proposing amendments to or revision of the Constitution shall follow the procedure for the enactment of bills."

That sentence, in effect, means that any House resolution to change the Charter must have corresponding action from

VELARDE SOWS | A6

US tells RP: Give us Smith

Judge says he's waiting for RP-US agreement

By Nikko Dizon and Tarra V. Quismundo

IN A NOTE VERBALE sent yesterday to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the US Embassy sought custody of the American Marine convicted on Monday of raping a Filipino woman and now being held in a cell at the Makati City Jail (MCJ).

Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon reiterated that the incarceration of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith was merely "temporary" and subject to the agreement of the two governments on the matter.

"For me (Smith's detention at the MCJ) is just temporary, and if there is already an agreement [between] the Philippines and the United States, so be it," Pozon told the Inquirer when asked about the custody issue.

"It's between our country and the United States, so when they decide at what facility Smith should serve his sentence pending appeal, of course the court will abide with that," he said.

Rafael Seguis, foreign under-

US TELLS | A11

THE ACCUSED, THE ACCUSER: Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith (left): Still numb and stunned by the verdict. Nicole at a press conference on Tuesday admits that "I do pity him, he's so young." She still shuns photographers.

JAY ISAIAH/INQUIRER

US Marine 'stunned;' CBCP cites lessons

By Christian V. Esguerra

HE COULD NOT BELIEVE THE decision and it left him "numb and stunned."

That was how Fr. James Reuter, SJ, described Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's reaction when he visited the American Marine soon after a Makati court convicted him of raping "Nicole" and sentenced him to 40 years in jail at the maximum.

"He still can't believe the decision," the 80-year-old Roman Catholic priest and spiritual adviser to Smith, 21, told the Inquirer yesterday.

Another Church leader said the Subic rape drama offered lessons to Filipinos.

Weiner, more especially, should be taught that "reconsidered is previous and noble, so it is not right for them to be flaunting it around," said Archbishop Oscar Cruz of Lingayen-Dagupan.

"They should not make themselves appear cheap and practically inviting to be violated by men," he said.

US MARINE | A4

Pozon on historic case: I'm a father, too

By Tarra V. Quismundo and DJ Yap

THE MEDIA-SHY JUDGE STOOD smiling by the half-open door to his chambers, looking entirely different from the stern-faced man behind the bench who stirred emotions on Monday.

When he convicted a young US Marine of rape.

It was the first time a Philippine court had convicted a US serviceman of a heinous crime since the country ratified the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which provides legal protection to US troops engaged in joint military exercises in the Philippines.

Judge Benjamin Pozon looked refreshed, as though he had finally enjoyed some shuteye, when he spoke with the media for a few minutes yesterday afternoon.

Indeed, Pozon told a few reporters who had waited for his chambers to open that he had "slept somewhat more soundly" on Monday night. "Of course, I had constantly worried if what I would do was right ... But then, of course, I did everything that I could."

The 54-year-old presiding

POZON | A5

Dark, silent Christmas for Bicol typhoon victims

By Ephrain Aguilar, Bobby Lalubas and Juan Escandor Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

"WE DO NOT KNOW HOW TO start again," was the common lamentation among typhoon victims in Albay province's capital city of Legazpi, as they cried for basic necessities like food, water, clothing and shelter.

Indeed, a dark, bleak christmas awaits residents of Albay, Catanduanes and other parts of the Bicol region who survived Supertyphoon "Reming" on Nov. 30.

The region of 4.6 million people is still without power, with downed communication polons lying unattended next to the highways.

In her five-hour visit to Camarines Sur and Albay yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered government agencies to stop all their finger-pointing and ensure that no communities affected by Reming would be left "isolated and hungry."

Reming (International code name: Durian), now downgraded to a tropical storm, continued with its deadly course overnight, lashing the coast of southern Vietnam, where official said at least 23 people had died and more were missing.

Power facilities in Albay, valued at about P200 million, were destroyed and restoring power may take more than six months, according to Alex Bautista, general manager of Albay Electric Cooperative (Aleco).

But Glen Rabonza, executive

DARK | A10

COMFORTER IN CHIEF: President Arroyo puts her arms around a typhoon victim in Legazpi City on Tuesday. Ms. Arroyo distributed relief goods, ordered faster recovery efforts and consoled the survivors.

Smell test developed to determine insanity

SYDNEY—AN INNOVATIVE "scratch and sniff" test promises to become a powerful new tool for sniffing out mental illness before the onset of symptoms, Australian researchers said on Tuesday.

SMELL TEST | A21

Images of utter despair move veteran photojournalist to tears

By Volt Contreras

THERE ARE IMAGES—WITH stories behind them—that move even veteran photojournalists to tears.

One of the award-winning Inquirer photographers captured one such picture while covering the still unending catastrophe brought by Supertyphoon "Reming" in Buyuanda.

Though he knew it could not be published for being utterly morbid, Edwin Bacasmas says he just had to take the photo "for myself." The shot was of naked corpses, numbering 45, lying on a sidewalk.

He says that image is profoundly disturbing, he explains, with the only "available light" coming from the generator-powered flu-crescent lamp of a nearby funeral parlor to where the pile of bodies led.

It was a "street scene" in Guinobatan, Albay one of the towns around Mayon volcano most hit by mudslides triggered by Reming last week.

Bacasmas now considers it "the largest number of corpses I have ever seen collected in one place" throughout his 12-year career.

He had to make that gory approximation, if only to under-

IMAGES | A21

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Miriam presses fight vs SC

By Juliet Labog Javellana

PURSUING HER FIGHT against the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) which had dropped her from its list of candidates for Supreme Court Chief Justice, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago yesterday urged President Macapagal-Arroyo not to appoint a permanent replacement for Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban but a temporary one when the latter retires tomorrow.

In a letter to the President, which she read into the Senate record, Santiago said Mrs. Arroyo should appoint an acting Chief Justice because the judiciary's nomination process was a failure and was tainted with corruption.

Santiago was to take her battle to Malacañang last night, where she was to meet with the President.

Santiago also advised Mr. Arroyo not to appoint Associate Justice Reynato Puno Chief Justice, despite the latter being the most senior of the four candidates for the position.

"If you were to appoint Mr. Puno, the public will suspect... with good reason—that he had unlawfully promised to decide in favor of the administration the controversial Impeachment case on the constitutionality of a nonelective assembly (Con-ass). Thus, the Supreme Court and the nonelective assembly would both lose all credibility," Santiago said.

The tension scenario was referring to the battle for Con-ass in Congress that the Arroyo administration was still fighting for in order to amend the Constitution despite having lost the case in the Supreme Court.

Santiago insisted suggested that an Incumbent Justice who was not on the short list of nominees be appointed acting Chief Justice until a "valid nomination process" could be undertaken. She said she would withdraw her own nomination if there were such another screening.

"I will ask the President when I see her [tonight] to appoint an acting Chief Justice. I'm going to tell her the JBC has lost all logic, all reason (for its extension)," Santiago told reporters.

On Monday, a seething Santiago had made inhouseman of Panganiban and the JBC in a caribou-inducing privilege speech after the JBC had dropped her and Justice Antonio Carpio from the short list of nominees for Chief Justice.

A furious Santiago lugged Panganiban as the mastermind of a "thinly-veiled" plot to drop her from consideration because she was a Supreme Court senatrix. She said she was also excluded because senators President Juan Ponce Enrile, Panganiban's former boss, was Mr. Arroyo's nominee.

In her letter to the President, Santiago told Mr. Arroyo the nominees process was tainted by irregularities and should be expunged.

She narrated how Panganiban had found her to scatter her public interview by the JBC after the five incumbent justices who were also candidates refused to submit to the process.

"I did not spontaneously make any right ... I was compelled to do so," she said, adding that after she did not go through with the interview, the eight JBC members went to see her in Ok holding room to thank her for her "cooperation."

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Sen. Edgardo Angara, however, expressed reservations about Santiago's proposal to appoint an acting Chief Justice.

Pangilinan, an ex-officio member of the JBC, said leaving an acting Chief Justice would place him or her in a situation where pressure could be applied on Ones by Malacañang if they wanted to keep their jobs.

Angara said there was no precedent for an acting Chief Justice and this should be avoided for the sake of stability in the judiciary.

On its part, Supreme Court spokesperson Jessel Khan Jr. said the high tribunal was unfazed by Santiago's tirade because the court was more concerned than the issue.

Khan said the court would rather leave it to the public to decide on Defensor's accusations.

"Well, it will depend on how the public will react to that," he said.

Admitting Defensor's remarks were "unsettling" but "not affecting the working committees of the tribunal in 'toto,'" Khan said the Supreme Court was not bound to react on them because they were uttered during a privilege speech delivered in the Senate.

"Whether the court finds anything [worth] to react to, it will depend on how the people will take it," he said.

With reports from Tonette Orejas and Christine O. Avendaño

HUGS GALORE. From hosting in the mouth to laughing from the, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago shows how quickly her mood can change. Sharing the light moment with her yesterday, a day after her angry tirade against the Supreme Court, is Sen. Lito Lapid.

Deadline nears for Disini deposits

By Norman Bordadora

MORE THAN $4 BILLION in Swiss bank accounts alleged to be part of the ill-gotten wealth of Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos and Herminio Disini will soon be freed from a 20-year freeze order unless the Presidential Commission on Good Government succeeds in securing a forfeiture order from the Sandiganbayan.

The Swiss Federal Court has given the Philippine government only until Dec. 31 to secure a forfeiture decision from the Sandiganbayan First Division looking into the alleged ill-gotten assets of Disini, a scion of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the developer of the country's worst debt nightmare, the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant.

After Dec. 31, if no forfeiture order is handed down by a Philippine court, the Swiss Supreme Court will revoke the block on the accounts of Disini and Herminio Disini, and the Swiss Federal Court's resolution releasing the funds.

Disini's wife, Dominica Escalin-Disini, and daughter, Lea Disini, filed a request to lift the freeze order on the Swiss bank accounts before the Swiss Supreme Court on Dec. 12, 2005.

The PCGG, represented by lawyer Sergio Salvosa before the Swiss high tribunal, said it was aware of the Disini family's legal moves to have the freeze order lifted.

The Swiss Supreme Court told the Philippine government that blocking the Disini accounts beyond 20 years may already be "a disproportionate limitation of the appellants' property rights and a violation of the principle of expeditiousness in the Swiss judicial assistance proceeding."

The Office of the Solicitor General filed last Nov. 20 an urgent motion for reconsideration and motion seeking an early resolution of certain issues and the setting of a date for the initial presentation of evidence by the government in the case against Disini that was filed with the Sandiganbayan way back in 1997.

But the case is still in the pre-trial stage and a decision by a forfeiture is not expected within the month.

Mike A back at Palace, 'healthier and stronger'

By Christine O. Avendaño

THREE DAYS AFTER undergoing an angioplasty to unclog an artery, First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo was back at Malacañang presiding with his characteristic twinkling hair, not to engage in any stressful activities for one week.

But the First Gentleman should be well enough to join his wife, President Macapagal-Arroyo, this weekend in Cebu for the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit, his chief of staff Ami Soliman said in a phone interview.

Soliman said Mike Arroyo would be part of a program for the spouses of the 10 state leaders attending the summit.

"Mr. Arroyo is expected to accompany the hospital much healthier and stronger than before," said the medical bulletin issued by St. Luke's Medical Center upon his discharge.

With President Arroyo away in sporting the damage wrought by Super typhoon "Reming"—on the flood regions, the First Gentleman was accompanied home from the hospital by his children and grandchildren shortly after 11 a.m.

Hospital officials issued the medical bulletin saying they were "forced to do" to "set the record straight" on the First Gentleman's three-day confinement that was attended by "misconceptions or inaccurate information coming out in broadcast and print media."

Mike Arroyo checked into St. Luke's on Dec. 1. The previous week, he and the President had spent the night at the hospital undergoing executive checkups.

On his confinement, his family refused to talk about his medical condition. All Malacañang would say was that it was not the President who needed hospital care but her husband.

Asserters, however, said the First Gentleman had a "heart-related" problem and may have needed to undergo an angioplasty. This was later confirmed by his younger brother, Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo.

The medical procedure, where a balloon-tipped catheter is inserted through the groin and into the diseased artery, was done to "help prevent the artery from narrowing again," Dr. Ador Sagun Corvinton, the President's medical team spokesperson and a liver specialist, said.

She said the procedure which was conducted on Dec. 1 lasted less than an hour and was a "complete success."

The only other medical bulletin the hospital had issued on Mike Arroyo had said that tests had shown that he had "coronary artery disease involving the narrowing of the left anterior descending coronary artery"

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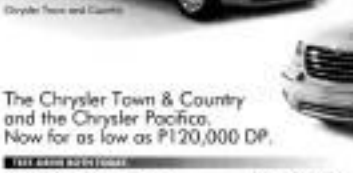

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House to pursue expulsion case against Cayetano

USING THEIR NUMERICAL MIGHT, THE MAjority in the House ethics committee yesterday voted to pursue a formal investigation into the expulsion case against Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, saying the First Family had submitted enough "substantial and credible evidence" to pursue the complaint against the Taguig-Pateros legislator.

Voting 27 to 7, the committee decided to end its initial review of the charges that members of the First Family led by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, filed against Cayetano and to proceed to the "investigation proper."

The committee also voted down an omnibus motion from Cayetano—that the committee reconsider its decision that it had jurisdiction over the case, to delist the hearing and for the committee to issue subpoenas to the personalities and institutions involved.

The complainants—the First Gentleman, his brother Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio Arroyo, his sister-in-law Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo and his younger son Diosdado Arroyo—submitted their evidence to the committee.

Cayetano was given until last Monday to submit his "countervailing" evidence but failed to do so, thing instead his omnibus motion.

'No evidence'

Cayetano did not attend the hearing yesterday as he was in a hearing of the congressional bicameral conference committee on the proposed election automation law.

South Cotabato Rep. Darlene Antonino-Custodio said Cayetano could not submit his evidence as he was given copies of the forward evidence only last Monday.

"There was nothing for him to controvert," Antonino said.

She explained that Cayetano was also asking the committee to help by issuing the subpoenas so he could gather more evidence.

But Iggy Arroyo pointed out that Cayetano had the chance to do that in the committee level, down when he made the allegations that a member of the First Family was maintaining millions of dollars in deposit in a German bank.

Philip C. Tubeza

Koreans favor OFWs

ACROSSED OVERSEAS FILIPINO workers are the No. 1 choice of employers in South Korea, many OFWs don't get the job because they are unable to pass the Korean language test.

On Ryung Ho, director of the Foreign Workers Employment Assistance Team of the former Human Resources Development Service, said Filipinos are the nationality of choice of many employers in his country.

Cho and other South Korean labor officials were in Manila recently to look at how their countries' Employment Permit System was being implemented here. The EPS is a government-to-government arrangement between the two countries for the deployment of OFWs.

Since the start of the EPS in April 2004, more than 20,000 jobs have been offered to Filipino applicants, but only 11,208 were able to go to Korea, according to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. Jeremy Andig

No Christmas ceasefire–Esperon

By Donna Pazz Bregar

ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. has indicated he will not recommend a Christmas ceasefire with communist New People's Army rebels this year.

Esperon expressed his view against the traditional Christmas ceasefire when interviewed by reporters during President Macapagal-Arroyo's visit to Legaspi City yesterday.

"There should be no ceasefire when it comes to terrorists," a spokesperson quoted Esperon as saying.

"During the interview, Gen. Esperon said those NPA (rebels) are conducting terrorist activities so there should be no ceasefire with them," Lt. Col. Ramsbuhar Bannar told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo.

The NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, is listed as a "foreign terrorist organization" by the United States, along with the extremist Abu Sayyaf Group based in southern Mindanao and the Jemaah Islamiyah Movement, a radical group of converts to Islam.

But the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which has been waging a separate war in Central Mindanao is not on the 22 terrorist list since the Philippine government is holding peace talks with them.

Last year, President Arroyo declared a four-day unilateral truce from Dec. 24 to 25, and Dec. 31 to Jan. 1 to observe the annual truce. Critics that is meant to give soldiers and rebels a respite from fighting.

Malacañang usually relies on the military's recommendation whether to declare a unilateral ceasefire during the Christmas holidays.

However, however, added that the military will abide by whatever decision the President makes.

"He (Esperon) said if there is a political decision that there will be a truce, then we will abide with the provisions of the truce," Bannar stressed.

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REVERED Jesuit Fr. James Reuter SJ, a resident of the Philippines the past 58 years and an honorary citizen, provided spiritual guidance to the four American Marines. He laments the guilty verdict on Smith as he is convinced that what happened between the accused and the accuser was consensual sex.

HOLIDAY '06

THE LANDMARK

US Marine . . .

From page A1

Cruz said the rape case should also teach men to "understand that the moment they violence women, whether consensual or not, the consequence of the act is big."

Retribution will come

"They'll pay for it one way or another," he said.

The initial price Smith has to pay is temporary detention at the Makati City Jail where more than 600 suspected leftists, robbers, swindlers and rapists are also detained.

Under Judge Benjamin Pozon's order, Smith will be held there until the Philippine and US governments agree on where to hold him pending the outcome of his legal appeal. (Story on Page A1.)

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) offered its own view of the case.

Keeping one's dignity

"It's about respect for the Filipina women. It's about the dignity of the Philippines in the face of rich nations," Msgr. Pedro Quitorio, CBCP spokesperson, told the Inquirer in a text message.

Cruz, a former CBCP president, appeared to agree.

He said that Filipinos, despite poverty, should "maintain our human dignity before any foreigner no matter how rich and influential they are."

"Before God, all of us are created equal," he said.

Another lesson that stood out in the case was that the "exploitation of women and children [is] one of the worst crimes of humanity, irrespective of color, race or creed," the archbishop said.

"Take care of Daniel"

"Such offenses cannot but deserve the biggest penalty allowed by law," Cruz said.

Smith's three rescuers—Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Baglanzki, and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter—were acquitted and flew out of the country within hours of the court's verdict.

Swaney, who sent off the three soldiers at the airport, said they were neither bitter nor angry at Nicole.

"Please take care of Daniel," he quoted the soldiers as telling him before they boarded the plane.

Along with their convicted buddy, Silkwood, Baglanzki and Carpenter hoped to become "stronger and better persons" after the controversy, according to Swaney.

A soldier's innocence

"Their reaction to the decision was very Christian," said Swaney, head of the Catholic Church's National Office of the Mass Media.

Swaney, who has been staying in the Philippines for more than 60 years, decried Pozon's decision, saying the judge disregarded the circumstances presented by the defense that would have proven the soldier's innocence.

"I really don't think Daniel was guilty," he said. "The Judge took every word of the prosecution as if it were gospel truth, but did not give a bit [of credence] to the words of the defense."

Swaney said he remained convinced that Smith didn't rape Nicole, that what they had was a "consensual" sexual act.

Nicole, a 21-year-old management accounting graduate, had accused Smith of raping her in a van in Ayala Bay Freeport late one night after they met in a nightclub, where she said she got intoxicated.

Correction

IN THE UBC 3 EDGE, an item in the Corrections box on Page A4 misspelled the first name of former President Emilio Quirino's daughter who died of pneumonia in Amsterdam on Nov. 28. Her name is Victoria—not Victoria—Quirino-Delgado.

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors in writing to the Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Floor, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Amorsolo Street, Makati City, fax No. 896-6785/90; e-mail address: dailyinq@inquirer.com.ph.

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Pozon on historic case: I'm a father, too

Front page 41

Judge of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139 spoke of his great relief: "Hinukluban ninyong subasoy sa dibdib ko. I welcome divine tax-time in deciding other cases."

In a landmark decision hailed by many and criticized by some, Pozon sentenced Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, 23, to up to 40 years behind bars for raping Filipina complainant "Nicole" on board a mickey one in the Subic Bay Freeport before midnight on Nov. 1, 2005.

But he acquitted Smith's co-accused—Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter—saying the prosecution had not presented sufficient evidence to prove that the three had conspired with Smith to committing "bestial acts."

Very young

Deciding his first rape case was an emotional experience for the judge, who said he almost cried a total while writing the historic decision.

"Both of them, the complainant and Smith, are very young. And I am a father, and I also have children, so it was really very hard to decide," said the father of three.

In fact, Smith's youth was also on 23-year-old Nicole's mind on Monday night.

"He's very young, he's almost my age. He's not going to be a hypocrite—I do pity him," Nicole yesterday said at a press conference in Quezon City.

"If only he never did what he did to me, if he didn't abuse me, we wouldn't be in this situation," she said in Filipino.

Nicole said that hours after the decision was handed down, she found it hard to sleep and had to deal with mixed emotions.

She said Smith seemed far too young to waste decades of his life in jail. But at the same time, she said, she wondered how she would have felt if Pozon had acquitted Smith.

"That's what I kept thinking about the whole night," she said. "If he had been acquitted, then I am the one who would be jailed. But I'm only human. I felt sorry for him when I saw him."

But the Zamboanga City native was not talking forgiveness.

"I can't forgive him because I can't see his repentance. It's easy to say sorry, but it's another if he doesn't mean it," she said.

"If he wants forgiveness, he should admit what he did to me and say that I was telling the truth, that I was not lying," she said.

Nicole also said she intended to visit Smith at his detention quarters in the Makati City Jail, just to make sure that he was not being accorded special treatment.

At the losing end

Flanked by her private lawyer Evalyn Ursua, her mother and her two brothers, Nicole thanked her supporters, the private prosecutors and her doctors.

She called for a review of the VFA, saying Filipinos were at the losing end of the agreement.

"It was only when I became part of this case that I realized we really should look into the VFA because it leaves no Filipinos at a disadvantage," she said.

She added that Filipino leaders should not always favor "friendship" with the United States at the expense of the Philippines' rights.

Pointedly, Nicole said she would thank only one government prosecutor—Hazel Valdez—and not the three other members of the prosecution panel assembled by the DOJ.

Officials had been engaged in a public feud with the state prosecutors, who broke the accused of trying to assuage a settlement with the teen she had charged with rape.)

Nicole also said she now wanted to go on with her life. She said she would like to apply for a job overseas, where she would not be recognized.

"I want to live a normal life again," she said.

Pressure from both camps

Judge Pozon, who joined the Makati RTC in December 2003, also said he had sensed pressure from both the prosecution and the defense.

"Of course there were pressures, although those may be imagined on my part because there was no direct [pressure], but from we all know that [pressure came from] both sides," he said.

Court staff said Pozon had received letters expressing support for both Nicole and the accused. The letters, sent by nongovernment organizations and sympathizers of the accused from the United States, reportedly were immediately rushed because the judge did not want to be influenced in making his decision, according to court officer in charge Jan Escalilla.

Pozon cloistered himself in his chambers when he deliberated on the case. After the trial closed on Oct. 5, it took him roughly two months to finalize his verdict.

He had to reschedule the promulgation of judgment from Nov. 27 to Dec. 4, citing the court's "voluminous records" and number of witnesses.

Pozon was the second judge to handle the controversial case, which was transferred to the Makati RTC on April 3 on orders of the Supreme Court.

Two Judges the accused were arraigned, RTC Judge Roman Del Rosario inhibited himself from handling the case because his son was working with the law firm representing Carpenter.

Rebuffs

Pozon, a University of the East law graduate, twice rebuffed the Department of Justice in major cases brought to his court this year.

When the four US Marines were assigned in April, Pozon decided against the DOJ resolution charging only Smith as principal in the case and holding the three others as mere accessories.

He also dismissed the illegal detention charges filed by the DOJ against former National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Samuel Ong, actor Rey Gerber and two others for allegedly holding Tsinga Mahal Dobbs against his will inside the San Carlos Seminary in Makati City in June 2005.

Ong, who has yet to come out of hiding, sought sanctuary in the seminary after exposing what he called "the mother of all tapes"—audio recordings that would purportedly prove President Macapagal-Arroyo's involvement in rigging the May 2004 elections.

Dobbs was a military intelligence agent who allegedly had a hand in wiretapping operations during the 2004 election season.

ILLUSTRIOUS MAKATI: Judge Benjamin Pozon makes history by convicting the first American soldier in the history of Philippine-American relations. He says he finally got a good night's sleep after rendering his decision on Monday. AMPALAYA

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Palace urges budget bicam to restore ₱8B

By DJ C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY URGED THE congressional bicameral conference to restore the P8.4 billion slashed by the Senate in the 2007 budget.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said the Senate and the House, which will meet soon to reconcile their versions, should reconsider the alterations they have made and come up with a budget that "will better closely reflect the intent and the interest of the country."

The Senate approved late Monday a P1.129-trillion budget which was P8.4 billion below the amount approved by the House a few months ago.

The senators said their oversight powers over the national budget to get back at what the government spent on fiscal laws that they felt had slighted them, slashing the budgets of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (from P99.188 million in P1), the Supreme Court (from P8.117 billion to P6.705 billion) and the Visiting Forces Agreement Presidential Commission (P2.194 billion to P100).

"It will be the agencies concerned that will assess the impact of the fund cuts and realign priorities proposed by the Senate on their respective public service," said Andaya in a statement.

Despite the cuts, Malacañang expressed appreciation to the Senate's approving of the budget before the end of the year.

"The government has been institutionalizing an e-numbered 2005 budget because of the Senate's stubborn insistence on slashing the Palace's budget proposals.

"We thank the Senate for approving on schedule the proposed calendared budget for 2007. We note with appreciation that the speedy approval by the Senate and by the House of the budget forestalls the possibility of the government again operating on a reenacted budget next year," Andaya said.

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PUBLICUS

Pagasa to get ₱200M more

By TJ Burgonio

AFTER GETTING BOGGED DOWN FOR failing to predict the volume of rainfall, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration will get an additional budget of P200 million under the Senate version of the 2007 budget which it could use to buy radars.

The P1.129-trillion budget approved by the Senate Monday night includes the new appropriation for Pagasa, which will allow the weather bureau to upgrade its radar systems so it can effectively predict the movement of subsiding typhoons.

"Right now, Pagasa's equipment can predict the wind speed but does not have the capability to predict the amount of rain that will be dumped on a particular area," Sen. Franklin Drilon, Senate committee chair, said.

He said that two Doppler radars, especially north Luzon could be purchased and set up in Baguio, the region most hit and protected by supertyphoon "Reming" last week.

"These radars will certainly help in the disaster preparedness infrastructure," Drilon said. On top of the P200 million, the Senate also allotted an additional P11 million for the construction of the buildings that would house the radars, he said.

Pagasa and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) had come under fire from some officials for allegedly failing to provide sufficient warnings and information on the Ilocos region devastated by the supertyphoon with the death toll expected to be over 500.

Pagasa was singled out for its alleged failure to predict the amount of rainfall spawned by the storm that triggered landslides and mudflows from the mouth of Mayon Volcano.

The Senate had allotted some P540.731 million for Pagasa in the 2007 budget, the same amount allocated to the bureau in Congress' version. Both chambers are expected to meet in a bicameral conference this week to reconcile their respective versions.

Drilon had earlier indicated at the Senate budget hearings that it should be easier to upgrade the country's disaster preparedness program for 2007 starting with the purchase of the two radars next year.

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Senators in no rush to OK RP-Japan pact

By TJ Burgonio

THE SENATE MAY SEEK OR convening the committee of the whole to take up the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) this month, further setting back the ratification of the economic deal touted as giving the country unparalleled access to the Japanese market.

The agreement has stirred a furor because of a provision seeking zero tariff on irreplaceable goods, which environmentalists fear could lead to the entry of hazardous wastes into the country.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who signed the JPEPA with former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi last September, submitted the agreement for senate ratification last Nov. 20.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, the chair of the foreign relations committee, asked all her committee's inquiry into the JPEPA that was to start tomorrow, Dec. 7, be suspended so that the committee of the whole, that is, the senate itself, be convened to tackle the ratification.

The trade committee, chaired by Sen. "Manny Villar" Roxas II, earlier wrapped up its inquiry into the trade impact of the agreement.

However, the rules committee under Senate Majority Leader Francisco Pangilinan would rather the committee of the whole be constituted the January to allow the Senate to wrap up deliberations on priority legislation before Congress goes on recess before the new Jan. 22.

Though he said he has yet to decide on the issue, Senate President Manuel "Mar" Villar said there was no need to rush to ratify the JPEPA.

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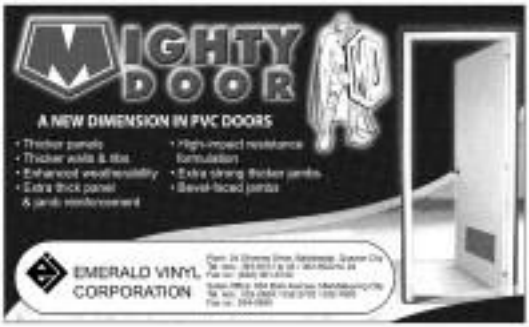
Velarde vows to stop Con-ass; House changes rule



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Senate.

The new rule soon simply reads: "Proposals to amend or revise the Constitution shall be by a resolution which may be filed at any time by any member."

The opposition said this move was illegal since it would deviate from the usual process of having any proposed amendment go through both chambers for concurrence or reconcilia.

The majority lawmakers argued that the no-vote motion could be deleted because the present Constitution does not specifically provide for separate voting on amending or revising the Charter. The Senate strongly disagrees.

Rep. Constantino Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, Cameron that Rep. Luis Villafuerte and allies Rep. Edcel Lagman led the majority in offensive.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the changing of the rule was illegal, citing past decisions of the House disallowing any amendments without first passing through the committee on rules.

"Tonight's vote is a historic and overwhelming vote for reform," Speaker Jose de Venecia told reporters.

Constitutional crisis

In the interview with the inquirer, Velarde warned that a Con-ass without the participation of the Senate would create a constitutional crisis.

"I don't think the Senate will take it sitting down," he said in an interview the other day.

Velarde denied a "project" Con-ass—which the Senate and the House voting in joint session and voting separately.

Velarde advised the House leaders to leave the task of amending the Constitution to the next Congress to be elected in 2007.

"They will only waste their time pushing this Cha-cha, which cannot be done. They should instead their panic buttons in the pervading smell of fear-mongering, which is underlying from the calamity (Unpredictable "Reming") and let a new Congress in 2007 handle this important issue of Cha-cha," Velarde said.

Do it proper way

Or, he said, the House could pass a resolution calling for the election of members to a constitutional convention, which would then undertake the Charter change.

The political opposition has denounced both the ill-starred people's initiative and the Con-ass campaign as Palace-backed stratagems to ensure the political survival of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has been hounded by unresolved questions about the legitimacy of her 2004 election victory.

Velarde denied statements by De Venecia that he (Velarde) was brokering and endorsing the House's Con-ass plan.

"I am not against Charter. I just want it done in the proper way," said Velarde.

Velarde repeated the House plan, which would scrap the May 2007 senatorial and local elections. Under the plan, a different election would be held in November next year to elect the members of parliament.

"There is no way we will agree to postpone the elections," Velarde said, adding the midterm polls would serve as some sort of a referendum for the Arroyo administration and "release her from the political pressures" resulting from doubts about the legitimacy of her presidency.

Velarde said that the House proposal to cancel the May elections weakened the congressional incumbency aspect.

House motive suspect

"They should not push it now because they are suspect already. Why are they afraid of the election?" Velarde said.

Asked if the suspicions of the congressional motives were spoiled by their plan to install themselves automatically as members of parliament, Velarde said, "Yes."

"In a simple sense, I can't understand why in the simple charter of a city the Senate has to remain (with the House) , but in the Charter of the land it won't be included," Velarde said.

He denied claims by De Venecia about his (Velarde's) supposed role in a Con-ass.

De Venecia had said Velarde was brokering talks with the Senate and had proposed the election of 34 regional seats for senators to the chamber's members.

"That was last year, during the time of late President Diliso (as Senate President). I tried to broker for a real Con-ass, which includes the Senate and the House on certain conditions," Velarde said.

JDV backtracked?

He said he resented that the voting in Con-ass be separate and that De Venecia agreed with this. He said he also proposed two types of representation in the parliament—the district and regional representatives.

But he said the talks bogged down because De Venecia backtracked on some of the agreements.

Velarde, who serves as a spiritual advisor of Mr. Arroyo, said he recently met with the President and "she was telling me to convince the Senate (to participate in the Con-ass)."

"She's really hoping for that," Velarde said.

House Deputy Minority Leader Rolex Suplico said that neither the Senate nor the country's highest court could stop the House from convening a Con-ass this month.

He said the largely anti-Charter change senators could not run to the Supreme Court to avoid abolition not yet, "much less could the Supreme Court issue a temporary restraining order while Con-ass is ongoing."

Political question

Suplico said the amendment of House rules governing proposals for any constitutional amendment, which would pave the way for Con-ass, was an "internal matter" by a coequal branch of government.

"The Senate has nothing to do with House rules. The Supreme Court in this point cannot prevent it," said Suplico.

He said the high court could not take it up now yet not only because it involved a "political question"—and thus outside of the purview of the Supreme Court—but also because the matter was not yet "justiciable."

Notice from the Senate

Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. said the upper chamber intended to notify the House that the two houses chamber could not go it alone on Con-ass.

Villar said that first day after Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II asked about the Senate's reaction to the hasty proceedings in the House to convene a Con-ass.

"We are preparing a resolution rebuffing our position that this is a bicameral government and the House of Representatives can't unilaterally force a constituent assembly. This resolution is being prepared by the majority leader," Villar said in reply to Roxas' query. With a report from TJ Burgonio

BIR: Be wary of 'night-duty' tax collectors

BUSINESSMEN should be wary of the issue of Internal Revenue personnel who wrestled tax compliance inspections on weekends and at night. Most likely, these people are collecting tong, not taxes.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag stressed that the BIR only authorizes tax compliance verification duties (TDZ) or tax mapping operations on weekdays during daylight hours.

"We have never authorized tax mapping operations and even BIR personnel to conduct surveil- ... lance activities at night or on weekends," said BIR Regional Director Alfredo Mangun and Revenue District Officer Rosemarie Rogaza.

The tax agency is, therefore warning to the wake of reports that some unscrupulous people, acting as BIR tax mappers, were robbing business and commercial establishments in Manila, particularly in Binondoand the Tutuban Market area.

Buñag noted that such operations usually conduct during the Christmas season together with the issuance of many unscrupulous businesses.

According to Mangun, legitimate and authorized tax mappers can be easily identified by their BIR identification cards and their uniforms. Also, they wear colored shirts with printed words "Tax Mapper" or "Tax Collector" and are armed with evaluation order.

Business owners can demand the presentation of a mission order before a tax mapping operation is conducted.

Its done with the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program, the BIR last year charged with tax evasion a Cebu City beverage concessionaire and his wife for P36.020 million tax deficiencies—P15.9 million in income tax and P4.3 million in value added tax—including surcharges and interests, for 2003 and 2004.

Charged were Antonio Uy, a beverage concessionaire of Sarsaraq Cebana xxxxx, and Carolina Ang, BIR investigation division chief.

Records showed that Carolina declared only gross revenues of P176,700 for 2003 and 2004, respectively, for her "Sto. Niño Dessert" while beverage receipts registered with the BIR in a One-Time Taxpayer (ONETT), Cynthia E. Bedana

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Cops told to enforce SC order on thrift bank

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY ORDERED national police officials to immediately enforce its earlier ruling to stop the former board members of the Air Materiel Wing Savings and Loan Association Inc. (AMWSLAI) from operating in their posts.

The Supreme Court (SC) en banc directed Ellasey et al., along with their agents and entities, and to temporarily stop discharging the functions and duties of board members and to vacate their positions immediately.

To restore order in the management and operations of the police-run thrift, the SC ordered the PNP Chief to ensure that the new board of trustees headed by retired Col. Ricardo Nolasco is able to get from their duties and functions, and to oversee the day-to-day and subsequent operation of the bank.

In the same resolution, the SC reiterated its decision stopping the implementation of the Court of Appeals' twice-extended Aug. 15, 2006 and Nov. 10, 2006 lands, ending the Oct. 14, 2005 election of a new AMWSLAI board. — Armand N. Nocum

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So The Public May Know

On November 28, 2006, operatives of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) raided the Kayabe Ice Plant and Cold Storage in Pampanga. They uncovered 62,000 kgs of pork meat, identified by the National Meat Inspection Service personnel as the illegally imported cargo from China which was earlier declared missing from the custody of the Bureau of Customs.

The Philippine Association of Meat Processors, Inc. (PAMPI) had already called upon its member-companies earlier not to entertain any offers of this China-sourced pork meat as raw material for processed meats upon receipt of reports of the disappearance of the cargo because **PAMPI does not sanction and regards all forms of smuggling and illegal importation as deplorable.**

PAMPI urges Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap to intervene on the apprehension and investigation of the Kayabe Cold Storage raid to ensure that those involved in compromising the country's livestock biosecurity are identified and punished to the full extent of the law.

PAMPI likewise commends the successful apprehension of the missing cargo by the PNP-CIDG team. Such efforts restore the confidence of the business sector in the sincerity and ability of police authorities to stem illegal activities and business crimes that cheat government of duties and taxes.

The following PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS, INC. (PAMPI) members commit themselves to the safety of the consuming public as their highest priority, and call upon their friends in the livestock sector to help prosecute the violators.

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Irrigation suffered heavy damage —NIA

Int'l experts see need to forecast landslides

By Blanche S. Rivera

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS HAVE AGREED that there is a pressing need to improve the capability of governments in the Asia-Pacific region to forecast landslides and mudslides in order to save more lives.

"There is an increasing trend in landslides and mudslides, and we're concerned how to better forecast them," Le Hon Tri of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Unescap) said.

He said there is now a global effort to improve the forecasting capability on mudslides and landslides which have caused more casualties in recent years.

"One of the first things we need to do is to get a good [picture of the] recurrence of hard and continue to monitor the amount of rainfall," James C. Weyman, director of the Honolulu-based Central Pacific Hurricane Center told the Inquirer in a recent interview.

"If there is rainfall over a short period of time, the whole bunch coming off at one time, there's greater possibility of landslide," he said.

Weyman, area manager of the center's weather forecasting office, said predicting landslides and mudslides was more difficult because there were so many factors like the type of soil and the amount of rainfall over a period of time.

He said there was a global project called Global Climate Observation which seeks to increase the amount of information experts get from around the world.

Not enough info

"Some (countries) have rain gauges and satellite information but we don't have the amount of coverage we need. There are not enough places we get information from," Weyman said.

He said the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the country's weather bureau, had "very good forecasting capability" as the weather bureau also gets data from other meteorological stations in China, Korea, Japan, Australia and the United States, among others.

Meanwhile, Pagasa yesterday said relief and rescue operations to typhoon-ravaged areas of the country could proceed in the coming days as no tropical cyclone was threatening the country.

No Typhoons

"There are no cyclones in the Philippine area of responsibility but the monsoon will bring rains. The development of a low pressure area is also possible, but it's still far," Pagasa weather branch chief Nathaniel Cruz said.

Weyman said forecasters now can accurately predict the development and direction of typhoons but predicting the intensity has not improved significantly over the past years. Meteorologists still do not fully understand the total structure of a typhoon and its complex variables.

"We need to get the information down to the last kilometer, it's useless if it doesn't get down to people that need it—[the] action quickly," he said.

"With better understanding of typhoons, we hope to reduce damage," he said.

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KC Concepcion shares how the service has helped her keep the bonds with her family and friends as strong as ever. "Ilke talaga ang dating ng boses. I miss my family and friends so much when I'm out of the country, so super okay that when I get back here, I get to hear their voices through Globe's new service."

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

A party to rape

EDITORIAL

A POLINARIO MABINI RESERVED SPECIAL SCORN and condemnation for Filipino soldiers who abused women during the Revolution. What that great thinker and patriot demanded of his compatriots should be the unanimous way Filipinos should demand of foreigners with regard to women everywhere, but most emphatically to Filipinas here at home. The problem has always been, whether at the turn of the last century or in the present day, that Filipino men are wont to remark, as former Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus once flippantly and notoriously quipped, that if rape is going to take place, "you might as well lie back and enjoy it."

Only a man could make such a callous remark, and only Filipino officials can decide whether or not to consent or be party to rape, whether of their fellow citizens or the country as a whole. The retirees for which Nicole demanded prosecution and a trial, were crimes against her person before the law, and against her identity as a Filipina. The court has spoken, as far as a rape not only having taken place, but the guilt of the perpetrator of sexual assault. But Nicole and the country will not receive their due for the public aspect of that crime: her having been dumped on the side of the road, undressed, degraded and abandoned.

It is during the times that individuals receive such treatment that the abstraction of sovereignty becomes a matter of fundamental (because it's personal!) justice and dignity. Rape is a crime premised on power, in deference of an individual's right to choose what to do and what not to do done to the self. It is also a crime against society, and a society is only as deserving of respect and protection as its determination to assert those rights for the powerless.

The country has, to be sure, come a long way since the time Filipino officials would fall over themselves in deference to American servicemen who shot Filipino scavengers on the pretext that they thought they were shooting at wild pigs. But it would be wrong, in this time, to praise all officialdom—or allow officialdom to praise itself, as it is lavishly doing in the wake of the conviction of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith. Praise must be reserved, first and foremost, for Nicole, once a victim but who vowed not to live the life of a perpetual one; and certainly credit is due her counsel who persevered the case. The country would also do well to hold in high regard the individual officials who bestowed an assuring, fiercely at times, every possible interpretation of the Visiting Forces Agreement favorable to the prosecution and the victim.

Although a verdict was reached, and Smith was convicted while his three co-accused were acquitted, because their guilt was not proven beyond reasonable doubt (which is not the same thing as saying they are innocent), the appeals process has begun. A legal controversy has erupted over the circumstances that should surround Smith's detention until every appeal is exhausted. It's unfortunate that Filipino officials lack unanimity with regard to this question.

We applaud Judge Benjamin Pozon's decision to order Smith's detention in a Philippine jail, in the absence of an agreement between the Philippine and American governments as to whether conviction should be detained. This is how all Filipino officials should undertake their official actions: firmly with Philippine interests in mind, and always to our country's maximum advantage. There, as now, there have been far too many Filipinos holding positions of authority who are willing to argue and push forward an interpretation of any matter favorable to foreigners.

Naturally Smith's lawyer will challenge Pozon's decision. We would say, by all means, let both sides come to the bargaining table. But like it was during the trial, as might it be during the appeal: how can there be a Philippine negotiating position where there are Filipinos willing to negotiate for the American side and not our own?

The case of Nicole shows that there remains no easy rogue and crushing proximus of the VFA for comfort. The questions over arrest, custody and imprisonment of accused or convicted foreign troops have only marginally been clarified by the present case. Our government is, once more, allowing events to dictate upon it, instead of taking the initiative in the national interests.

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We have been in a state of calamity since 2004

FREQUENT MALAPROPISM ARROYO DECLARED a state of national calamity the other day because of the death and destruction left behind by supertyphoon "Reming."

Too late. The nation has been in a state of calamity since 2004 when GMA became President.

* * *

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago went bullistic when the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) did not include her in the short list of nominees for the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. She complained the JBC and the whole Supreme Court, particularly Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, Ahit Chan, for the imagined slight.

Ironically, her behavior showed that the JBC did the right thing.

* * *

To be included in the list of nominees sent to the President for appointment, a candidate must garner a minimum of five votes from the JBC members. Mirasol and associate Justice Antonio Carpio did not get the required five votes. Mirasol got only one vote.

Needless to say the supreme irony if that vote was cast by Bengalenos when Miriam blasted her last explosion!

* * *

After the conviction of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, it was understandable for the crowd to shout, but the action of the police in immediately separating him forcibly from his cosaccused Suzette Nicolas in the courtroom. What's wrong with allowing him a few minutes for some last words with his fellow Americans? Maybe he wanted to leave a few words for his family.

By that action, the police turned dangerously close to a lynch mob and the Philippines to a savage country, not a civilized one.

* * *

The administration may actually be able to pass a Con-Ass resolution through Congress despite clear evidence that a majority of its members do not favor Charter change. But it may even be able to make the Commission on Elections strike a plebiscite, persuade the Supreme Court to give its blessings, have the

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

amendments passed by the Con-ass and actually make the people vote for it. But is it the best for us?

Sure really makes waste. And some more dangerous than in amending or rewriting a constitution. But the congressmen and their allies are in such obscene haste that their effort could result in tragedy. We can change the Constitution but not its provisions that have been put there that would benefit themselves. But in the Con-ass, we have a gang who have no qualms about revising the Charter to benefit, first of all, themselves. To have steady homes and responsive constituents, we should wait until all the present congressmen are out of power. Let the new Congress formulate the amendments. Then, Charter change can be an issue in next year's elections.

But the administration and its allies are afraid they would be massacred in the elections. So they would they all lose their jobs, GMA may be impeached by the newly elected Congress and then the Senators will never realize his dream of being chief executive of the country. The only way to prevent this is causing delinda is to postpone the elections. That is why the Cha-cha express train has assumed an air of desperation.

As I said, they may succeed, but we can still prevent Charter-less Constitution. We can all vote "No" on the plebiscite.

* * *

Sometimes the Supreme Court, instead of clarifying legal questions, actually makes them more confusing. Recently, the Court upheld the constitutionality of the mining rule in allowing foreign investors to invest in the industry for the large-scale exploration of minerals. This decision in the La Bugal case, it is widely believed, would entice foreign investors to invest in the Philippines. In a subsequent decision, however, the Court, in upholding Mining vs Southeast Mining Gold Corp., may have caused the contradictory effect of discouraging these investors.

Foreign investors are alarmed by this recent ruling which declared the transfer of "mineral rights" to be prohibited by law. According to professor Harry Roque of the University of the Philippines Law Center, these rights are not established patents because that "mineral rights" are property rights and thus may be transferred.

"Apparently, the Court considered a 'mining permit' as being synonymous with 'mineral rights.' This is wrong," Roque said a forum on foreign investments. "In filing its comment in Fortuna, the Court noted that mining rights, but not permits. In some, may be assigned." He said that this latest ruling, investors believe, might again discourage foreign investors from entering the industry.

Roque also expressed alarm over certain constitutional infirmities in the decision. "The decision restricts an already fixed and mandatory duration to Apex Mining vs Commissioner case which prohibits the acquisition of mining rights by Filipinos through the proper procedures of a permit to explore in the Binalatong area." This, according to him, causes for doubt pursuant to the principle of finality of judgments. Moreover, since the subject of litigation involves "an issue of constitutionality, that is, whether the executive has the power to increase or diminish foreign landholdings which Article XII, Sec. 4 of the 1987 Constitution provides to the proper subject of legislation, the case should have been decided by the tribunal en banc and not by a division."

Roque concluded that the best way to attract investors is to promote a climate of predictability. Only then, he said, foreign investors are assured of commercial predictability will they consider the Philippines as a worthy destination among the many investments."

Hero too, sort of

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

TOM HANKS THE PICTURES. THE GUY WAS deserving in anyone beside his apparently most illustrious peers. That was Dion "Bum" Bayas at the Time Asia Awards ceremonies in Hong Kong, while standing beside Cory Aquino, Tiger Woods and Corey Maypenn. He was the next picture of self-effacement.

"Why me?" he would ask with genuine bewilderment later on, a predicament he is not known to face in the billiard table, where he would find the more amusing answer to this most perplexing basis. What's his name? Isn't he the title, "The Magician," a title he has lived up to over the years. He came in Hong Kong however was another league altogether. So affable, so humble, so appreciative of the honor which he personally felt he did not belong. To be ranked among Cory, Eggie and Lotty and to be called a hero by no less than Time Magazine. (Just was more than he bargained for.

"Why me?" he said in Tagalog, a language that apparently can't do justice to the word and to and goon affair. "I have not done anything that made any impact on human life. I am just a simple man making a living in what I do best: pinning billiards."

David Letterman might and one I suppose that will be a subject of much debate in neighborhood more where the Hongkong Tatler congregate to divine the wave of outfit though the climes of hell.

Why Bata? Why one of the heroes of Asia? Why not, just viewed from on the level of sports or entertainment heroes? Why not just type him into something akin to a look out of a film star? Why put him at par not just with Cory, Eggie and Lotty but with one of my literary heroes, Salman Rushdie? Who, apart from interesting the nation moved, as Time says, has reinvented billiards by being on Ivan's Stoichi? Bum? Of course, some of my Indian friends swear he is not the most pleasant man in the world, but who cares? Artists and writers are not meant to be pleasant.

On the face of it, there truly seems nothing staggering in Bata's accomplishments to throw him into the pantheon of the gods. But that's only

ing loop. As hacking adversity goes, it is nothing less than heroic.

It's hero to someone who inspires, then Bata has a better claim to being one. He unwittingly inspired countless middle and past forsome he was impossible but because he played a game that fell under the upraised brow of misery. What Bata wrought I glimpsed recently in a joke told by a friend. Sidney, he said, when your parents asked you why you have been late for the past two years that you had just been on the pool hall, you got a certain leg in a language that to convent follows from would contain lightning bolts and swastikas. Today, when your parents ask you why you came home late and you answer that you had been in the pool hall, you are told, "A, you better me mad. (Do it diligently)."

None of this is a knock at "to be, be trust." All of it merely says that there is no human presumption, other than crime, that is an body it has proved to be. There is no human endeavor pressure but shows grace under pressure, who doesn't just lift his on his shoulders like what the world has scratches but bend when he misses with a glint of laughter in his eyes, then Bata has the best claim to being a hero. He hasn't just made an amazing leap, he has shown an amazing grace. That's what sets him apart from Pacquiao, notwithstanding that the latter is a cage in embers many, too. Bata hasn't just played the game of pool brilliantly, he has played the game of life luminously.

"I am just a simple man making a living by doing what he does best." I won't use still first, as Bata shows, you can always do that many other complaining life is unfair, and nothing why it is unfair to you. Because you can also make a worthless grin at it, and take it, win or lose, like a champion.

And live it, up or down, like—a hero.

'Abe' Aguilar Cruz: newspaperman, etc.

ANALYSIS

Jonondo Buwatlo

THE PASSING OF THE GLOBAL AGE OF INSPIRED and inspiring Filipino editors can never be more pronounced than today when the biography of Abraham "Abe" Cruz is launched at a small, quaint restaurant named "Abe" in Bonifacio Global City.

The launch is doubly significant as a farmer's or fisherfolk event because frankly, the biography is the last unexplored area of work that, ironically, also arguably the most fittingly defines "Abe" Cruz as in the newspapers fraternity called him, as a man of many parts, including a gentleman and lucky man, a lover of this good life—the best of his successful years, and the most attractive of Joaquin's late book is no less in itself.

Abe was editor of the Daily Mirror, the afternoon sister paper of The Manila Times, in the 1960s, in which I worked as a foreign affairs reporter and a columnist for 10 years. He was already a legend in the Philippine newspaper world when I entered his path in a time of profound change in Philippine journalism.

The Mirror was born a few years afternoon PE. years daily in English. Abe and Joaquin were contemporaries, friends, and they belonged to that wonderful gifted circle of literary men who made newspaper reading a delight. The late Carlos Quirino called "Inspirers in a hurry" or some others the "first draft of history."

Joaquin called his work "Abe: A Frank Sketch," and told his publishers never to tamper with it. Abe's friends, however, would have preferred "R. Frank Sketch," we have no honest and unsettled labored portrayal of Abe whose talents ranged from not only being an editor, newspaperman, but also being a gentleman, a responsible journalist, a tough linguist, an essayist and a culinary connoisseur—to complete human being.

No one could have captured the manner of Abe as a literary man more than Joaquin. Both were newspaper men, but their interests ranged further afield than mere chronicling events. He call Abe a "voluminous mind" or a "man of all interest" a to haggard words and circuitous chats. Of all the topographies of men and women of consequence he was never intimidating. In fact, he looked more like a foreign scholar behind the formidable, draped table we call in the trade as the "news desk." It seemed to me that Abe and the news desk were not made for each other.

Abe was the last person one would expect to produce a daily newspaper setting for Political Affairs. He was a literary type, a man not presiding on a crusading editor bent on toppling governments, or aspiring to be hosted in the Lahaigue or Hyde Square. All he was interested in as an editor and newspaperman was to produce a lively, readable newspaper, one that would not bore its readers to sleep, a big city printing with humanity, its sins and its virtues.

In the 1960s, the afternoon paper had begun to be an endangered species. Electronic papers in many of the big cities of the world were beginning to take away the time-honored newspaper habit. The afternoon newspapers have survived this onslaught of TV news and falling advertising, with Le Soir in Paris, the London Evening News, one of the last recognizable of afternoon newspaper publications.

The passing of Abe in 1993 also marked the end of an era of great editors and newspapermen associated with the golden age of Philippine journalism: the likes of Jose Lava Cuisia, Vicente Jr. Jesus Paris, Jose Lansang, S.P. Lopez, Jose V. Bautista and C.P. Salonga, to mention a few. A generation has departed after them.

Abe was indeed a product of the Philippines of the age of giants of Philippine journalism. He was not only a newspaper editor chronicling the flow of life of the big city and of the nation. He also had a flair for the literary aspect and culture of living in pairs, sharing them with those of the subject of his public pen. An editor knows the people who read his letters each day more than Abe. He interviewed their fears and their aspirations, epics and mediocrity, poetry and prose alike.

He observed life at its best. The Daily Mirror behind Abe and the reality of Philippine politicians—the people who wrote the news, their fears and their loves.

Not just bad luck

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"ANG MALAS NAMAN NG MGA TAGA-ILOILO, ILO-ILO nalang!" (Such unfortunate fatalities as we suffered! I'm sorry footage of the disaster scene in Albay is the scene of Typhoon "Reming," I felt the same way), that dazed taxi driver said, referring to people in the region who were hit by the typhoon.

After Tim Bersamin interviewed a grandma from "Mahayag" just last September, Reming followed a little more than two months later, sweeping through the same area and leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake.

But this time, there was the added devastation of mudflow from the slopes of Mayon Volcano burying hundreds of residents in nearby areas, the debris the result of months of pyroclastic activity. The typhoon was also more powerful, packing its wrath for some time. Most may have been saved from a volcanic eruption, but it did not subdue, with the deadly combination of heavy rainfall and unstable volcanic material.

The Bicol region is known for its general panicky in Philippine disaster stories, mainly because its geographical location places it among the first areas to be hit by storms emerging in from the Pacific. In turn, its vulnerability to natural disasters has been noted as explained by poverty, as poverty in Bicol, with crops and landmarks consistently laid to waste by typhoons, floods and volcanic eruptions. This is the reason as well for the hardship that takes the people's lives.

But the unfortunate fatalities and flooding is unusual even for a region attuned to nature's wrath. Two supertyphoons just months apart? Is Siero being singled out for punishment?

NOT really. Or rather, it isn't just Bicol, or Luzon or the Philippines that has come under obvious **beam concerning weather and its wrath some** quarters. Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan, president of Manila Observatory, a Jesuit Father's Philippines, in an article, warns of even more superlyphoons and catastrophic calamities in the class of "Katrina" targeting different areas of the globe.

In the Philippines, writes Tan, "the past decade has seen a marked increase in the last nine years, still seems to follow the historical pattern, i.e., July to September, to be the frequency of

In Mindoro and Bicol last week, "it took a single storm in all this magnitude to cause sufficient disturbance and damage to cause calamity of monumental proportions throughout an entire region. One storm, at the wrong place and at the worst time, can cripple a nation."

The number of powerful storms, the "superlyphoons" in the class of Milenyo and Reming, have increased dramatically over the last four years, Tan observes. "From zero to two months per year in the period before the late 1990s, Pagasa does seem to show that, between 2001 and 2006, we had catastrophic typhoons up to six months per year. Remember the previous readings to the high to mid-1800s are no longer uncommon."

* * *

In the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" Tan's not, experts the world over are in agreement that the unstable and volatile weather conditions we have been experiencing are due to a single human global warming.

The primary explanation, Tan, "the intervention human but and cold temperatures (human-made) patterns in the planet surface waters, therefore, the addition of thermonuclear increase as well."

The most longitudinal studies proving "an exponential increase in the number of typhoons" in people line of which he describes as resembling a hockey stick. This rising base on the earth's surface, commonly described as global warming, is being caused by so-called "greenhouse gases" (GHG), which include in the main, carbon. "The burning of fossil fuels, primarily oil and coal, for

And this is the challenge that now confronts countries like the Philippines and regions like Bicol.

While relief and rehabilitation efforts are important and should be pursued, they will not bring an end to an unending cycle of death and destruction. For this, "preventive and strategic solutions" must be pursued, specifically one that addresses the problem of global warming.

Tan is becoming evidence that the effects of global warming are a traveling ground for new measures and new approaches. The "idea" of, more than will be felt more severely than others. The 15 million Filipinos who depend on seafood as a primary source of protein will be the last ones that, others. Increasingly and unpredictable storms as to increase the dangers the state of very small-scale fishing activity, there can be no substantial development. Without a manageable level of predictability, there will be less and less time between storms. Global warming is not merely an environmental problem, it is also one that must seek out political, economic and social factors that have our country and its entire planet.

ONE would want energy efficiency to be the rallying cry for all seasons. The enabling environment for renewable energy should be established and in use mainstreamed. The Renewable Energy Bill must be passed. Investments in energy should be directed to those that are efficient energy should be identified, promoted, widely distributed and encouraged." At well, greenhouse gases producing redundancies must be held accountable "for the cost costs of mitigation," which these remain should be promoted and private transport options made more expensive.

"If we hope to provide a good life for our children, basic adjustments have to be made now," Tan says.

He offers a true word of hope: "We control it, the last engine. We must."

Stripped and defiled

LOOKING BACK

Jambesh R. Geranglo

we have yet to cope with the idea of Christmas. I often find myself rushing to find presents in the morning of Dec. 24, as friends then I end up with the cardiest gifts. It is a relief enough that the holidays is not as popular as it used to be.

I once executed the opinion that there are seven, six only a handful of Filipinos in existence, and that those few are pained or still rejected because many nobody wants them, or we are led to believe that they are not worthy of our support. We notice a Filipino, carry some name on the bottom, wrap it again, send it off and count the days before it returns as the bottom of your Christmas may as unboughtable gift from friend or family.

I was reminded of this when Christmas dinner last Monday. I wondered how many from the sales the President receives and whether there are benefits. I had not been invited to Malacañang for the dinner, but I watched at the Filipino hall, the annual Heroes Hall of the Malcon would become the home of Philippine heroes by National Artist Guillermo Tolentino adorn it. The descendants of people whose names we still remember from textbooks and streets were invited to attend the dinner hosted over the Palace by retired PNP Director Gen. Oscar Florendo Aglipay who, as you can guess, is the assisted descendant of Gregorio Aglipay.

Five of the descendants reminded us of the unsung hero in Tirad Pass (Gregorio Aglipay) and Gen. Antonio Luna (Gen. Florendo), who delivered the country while President Emilio Aguinaldo escaped further up north. It is unfortunate that we have no Filipino generous acquire of the hotels, but then Richard Gordon's table of the Heritage Hotels, Jose Antonio Vargas' table of the Heritage Hotels, Jose Antonio Vargas' table of the Heritage Hotels, Jose Antonio Vargas'

Formula makers' suit deplored

LETTERS

WE, AT THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE Rights of Children in Southeast Asia (ARCSEA), are appalled by the recent moves of milk companies and foreign businesses to "kill" the safety measures adopted by government health agencies through the efforts of breastfeeding advocates. The current TRO (temporary restraining order) issued by the Supreme Court upon the petition of milk companies, denies Filipino consumers, specifically mothers, their right to information and their right to be forewarned of the risks of formula feeding.

Milk companies have also threatened to file a case against the Philippine government at the World Trade Organization (WTO). This was the case in Guatemala, where an infant food giant succeeded in circumventing a law on breastfeeding after facing business threatened to withdraw from that country preferential treatments in trade deals.

The milk companies enjoyed a 400 percent increase in sales, more than 20 years after the Philippines joined the WTO in 1995. The World Health Organization estimates that Filipinos spend P43 billion a year on infant formulas. This best exemplifies how profit-driven milk companies are at the expense of the general health and survival of infants.

Studies have shown that formula-fed infants and children die more frequently than breastfed infants. Worse, the risk of death due to infant formula-preventable diseases is highest in developing countries. According to WHO, it is estimated that every year, 36,000 child deaths in the country can be traced to formula-feeding. This proves how inferior and potentially lethal infant formula is to breastfeeding.

We, milk substitutes can compete with breast milk. If President Macapagal-Arroyo really cares for children as she would like to project herself, she should support efforts to ensure that safety measures are in place as stated in the Milk Code.

The government must not cater to the belly-aching, bullying and intimidation of these big companies. The government should not baby them. The survival of the new generation of Filipinos must not be placed in the hands of these milk companies.

—SOPHIATOR B. LATBUCE,
executive director, Association for the Rights of Children in Southeast Asia (ARCSEA), arcsea@childrights.ntu.org

Norvasc users' intervention sought

THERE WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE the INQUIRER for its very accurate editorial on Pfizer's betrayal of the people's right to affordable medicines. (FOR, 11/29/06)

We agree that Pfizer's lawsuit is intended to "blackmail" the government and delay the "rush working" procedure or the introduction of a cheaper, generic version of Norvasc when its patent expires next year. If Pfizer wins the suit, it could effectively extend its monopoly over the product by another 18 months, after its patent expires in June 2007. (It takes 30 months for the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) to evaluate an application for drug registration.)

The patients will, therefore, have to bear the burden of another 18 months of high-priced Norvasc while Pfizer enjoys another 18 months of patent control and assured sales. This will translate into at least $2.38 billion more in additional sales for Pfizer, based on its sales growth. (Norvasc's sales in the Philippines in 2005 hit $1,345 billion and have been growing annually at 14.5 percent.)

If Pfizer succeeds, it can use the same strategy to prevent generic competition from manufacturers entering the market even after the patent expiration of Pfizer's Lipitor, Zithromax and Viagra brands. These have annual sales of P368.3 million, P178 million and P428.8 million, respectively.

Debate is calling on the Norvasc users to come forward and exercise their patients' rights over the pharmaceutical monopoly granted patent rights. That way, the committees can act and be counted as one of the interveners in the case filed by Pfizer.

A suit for Pfizer in the case would allow other multinational pharmaceutical companies to continue depriving poor people of access to affordable medicines, thus compromising their health.

—SHEZZIAH STASS,
Oslan campaigns coordinator in the Philippines, 91 Kalentong St., Teachers' Village, Quezon City

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FOSS: not confusing, its benefits are clear

IN HIS NOV 21 COLUMN, CESARIO RAMAL said I did not really author the bill "Free, Open Source Act of 2006" now pending in Congress, that quoting the Business Software Alliance (BSA), he also derided the bill as a "prime model of confusion."

Let me assure him that I authored the bill. My office worked on it for four months. It started with a suggestion from FOSS (free/open source software) advocates in the Computer Professionals Union (CPU). Modeled after the Brazil and Peru FOSS policies, it is the result of inputs from various geeks, techies and FOSS practitioners—from my two-staff who happen to be competent IT professionals, IT lawyers in the UP College of Law, members of the Philippine Linux Users Group (PLUG), GNU Linux gurus and prime advocate Rahmad Stallmann of the MIT-based Free Software Foundation, who personally e-mailed his very valuable comments. It also contains inputs from the government's Commission on Information and Communications Technology and the International Open Source Network of the UNDP.

FOSS computer applications may be acquired, copied, modified or redistributed by their users as they see fit. They are the generic drugs of the software industry, prevailing consumers with an alternative to the expensive, overbearing and restrictive products of proprietary software monopolies.

With FOSS, if a consumer needs an office suite that has applications for word processing, presentations, spreadsheets, graphic/drawing and database, he can either get Microsoft Office for P19,000 or simply download OpenOffice on the Internet for free. Also, he has the chance to modify the program plus the permission to redistribute it to every Juan, Pedro or Maria without the fear breathing down his neck.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) says FOSS has the following strategic benefits—(1) developing local capacity for users; (2) reducing imports; conserving foreign exchange; (3) enhancing national security; (4) reducing copyright infringements; (5) enabling localization; (6) increasing competition; (7) reducing total cost of ownership; and (8) achieving vendor independence...for which reasons the French parliament and entire French police force have junked Microsoft and are now migrating to FOSS, just like so many other governments in the world.

What my bill wants is for the government to use and encourage the development of FOSS as well as apply open standards in its IT requirements. It also encourages the education sector to develop IT professionals knowledgeable in this new trend in the software industry. What's so confusing about that, only Ramal and his cronies in the BSA can tell.

We understand the existence of proprietary software monopolies to the full tilt. It's a free market out there and government has every right to choose the products it wants. The pharmaceutical monopolies hated the Generic Bill like hell, but Congress passed it nevertheless because it was good for consumers.

—RIZ TERRY CASIÑO
party list, Bayan Muna

Law may backfire on GMA, AFP and PNP

THE ENACTMENT OF AN ANTI-TERRORISM LAW is not advisable under the present Philippine political setting. To do so would classify Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's use of the police and military establishment as terrorism.

While there is no known universal definition of terrorism, the acceptable ones are already embodied in such crimes as rebellion, insurrection, coup d'etat and conspiracy. These will make an anti-terrorism law superfluous and unnecessary. Meaning, the obviously or such crimes also define terrorism as involving an armed organization (military and/or police) that uses violence (making the heads of people in peaceable assemblies) or that threatens the use of violence to intimidate, coerce and create fear among a population to achieve or serve a political objective (ensure the survival of the present administration). With that definition of terrorism, GMA, as commander in chief of the police and military, becomes the head of a terror organization.

In our present political setting, our legislators should think hard before they decide to arrogate themselves from passing legislations, such as an anti-terrorism law, just to copy what governments in the West are doing.

—BRIG. GEN. ROMEO S. BRAVO (Ret.),
for Email (mailto:[illegible])

Across the NATION

'Reming' halts Albay mining operation

AUSTRALIA'S LAFAYETTE MINING LTD. SAID yesterday it does not expect operations at its Rapu-Rapo mine in Albay province to start for at least six weeks due to damage from a powerful typhoon.

The company's shares fell 13 percent to A$0.085 after it said flows had been some damage to base metal plant facilities and to a loading dock, and more substantial damage to other facilities, including offices.

"It is still too early to provide a definitive estimate of the likely cost of restoring the site to operating conditions. It is expected that reconnection of base metals production will not occur for a period of at least six weeks," Lafayette said in a statement.

Supertyphoon Reming hit the Philippine coast on Thursday.

It was the second typhoon this year to hit Rapu-Rapo, located on a remote island 190 km southeast of Manila and the latest in a series of troubles.

The mine is running on a temporary cleanwater order after being shut down last year following two cyanide spills.

The company hopes the government will allow it to resume mostly re-open after Lafayette reviewed all its environmental procedures.

Lafayette said it estimates the first shipments of concentrate will be ready within a month of a restart of operations. It added that the damage may also, depending on its extent, affect indications it had taken on interim short-term working capital.

Lafayette has estimated the hole can generate revenues of $200 million a year from annual production of 10,000 tons of copper in concentrates, 14,000 tons of zinc, 50,000 tons of gold and 600,000 ounces of silver.

Aside from damaging some facilities at the mining site, Reming also wrecked homes in several villages in Legazpi City, the Albay capital, toppling electric posts and embankings and, above and beside, into villages where at least 1,000 are believed to have been killed.

Some officials have given up hope of finding more survivors under tons of rubble that fell on the villages.

Hundreds of passengers were stranded in flood pens at the height of Reming.

Six trips were also suspended as roads were blocked by debris.

Officials said it would take years for Albay to fully recover from the devastation wrought by Reming. Reuters

'Your job is done, good soldier'

A BOY sits as an honor guard watches over the effigy as he awaits the 21-gun salute for the late Staff Sgt. Rolando Dorin. Jose Carlo Gonzalez/Philippine Daily Inquirer/Inset, Lyndon Dorin

DAGUPAN CITY—"YOU CAN REST now. Your job is done, good soldier."

With these words from American Army Brig. Gen. Shawnn Tomchilson, Filipino-American Staff Sergeant Rolando Dorin was buried here on Monday in full military honors.

"Thank you for your courage, thank you for your sacrifice, thank you from the people of two great nations, the United States of America and the Philippines," said Tomchilson, commander of the United States Army special operations command in Korea, in his remarks during funeral mass at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral here.

Dorin, who would have turned 28 today (Dec. 4), was killed on Nov. 7 in Kirkuk, Iraq, after being struck by small arms fire during an air assault mission. His flag-draped coffin arrived in his parents' house in Barangay Herbal here on Monday.

"Did made the ultimate sacrifice, giving his life courageously in protecting his men. He saved the life of his squad through his courage and selfless actions and for brought his soldiers back home," Tomchilson said.

Dorin, who was the infantry squad leader of nine soldiers, was the only casualty during the operation.

US ambassador Kristie Kenney called to attend Dorin's funeral.

In his homily, Fr. Jiri Greco recommended Dorin for his military-style funeral and for his "quiet integrity."

Greco said they were schoolmates at the San Cesario Elementary School here, where Dorin's mother, Rosario, is a teacher.

He said was a tragedy but Dorin's death was not pointless because he died serving in a war "that hopefully will bring peace."

"It is always more tragic when good men just do nothing in spite of the evil around them. Dorin died for the ideals he believed in. He died for his friends. He died as a hero," Greco said.

"Stichwell Dorin, welcome home. We are proud of you," said Greco. Gabriell Gavilanes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Roundup

Slay suspect charged

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur—Police have said they have already identified the two suspects in the killing of a German national in Barangay Holeong on Nov. 29. Chief Insp. Ferdinand Rosario Jr., San Francisco police chief, said Monday that they have filed cases against the two, who he declined to identify. Rosario said the suspects were still at large and identifying their could jeopardize efforts to arrest them. The German national, Karsten Roemder, 53, of Wuthburg, Germany, died from a blow to the forehead when he engaged the suspects, who were hoarding kidnapping and hold-up. The gunfight. Police launched a manhunt after the victim had talked to some people in the mountain. Jhon Fergenbraun, Inquirer Mindanao

P1M lost in Negros fire

BACOLOD CITY—About P1.1 million in dry goods and pieces of property went up in smoke on fire hit the public market of La Castellana town. El'der south of here, early Saturday, police said. Fire razed 15 commercial stalls, including three government-owned stores, and the eastern portion of the town public market roof, Senior Insp. Placido Dorotana said in his report to the Negros Occidental Police Provincial Office. Police said the fire could have been caused by faulty electrical wiring. The fire started at the eastern portion of the public market about 1 a.m. Saturday. La Castellana Mayor Lucio Gumban said the new public market of La Castellana, constructed in the 1990, had already been hit twice by fire. Carli Arcinal, Inquirer Visayas

8 alleged gang members held

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Eight suspected members of a big-time criminal syndicate, including a woman, involved in robbery-holdups were arrested in Mabitac town Wednesday afternoon, police said. Chief Insp. Ricardo Layugan Jr. said the suspects belonged to a crime group preying on cell reports in Batangas. He identified those arrested as Zaldy Placio, 49; Rodolfo Manuel, 50; Manuel Montemayor, 52; Arturo Torres, 46; Tirso Estrella, 39; Charlie Marasigan, 45; Gerry Ramirez, 50; and Rosario Serrano, 51. Supt. Jerome Bolisoc, chief of the police Regional Special Operations Group (RSOG), said the suspects were caught while transferring of from a delivery tanker owned by Pilipinas Shell to another armed truck in Barangay Cuenang at around 1:30 p.m. He said four of the suspects were on board a minivan Mitsubishi Adventure and a jeep and served as "security" for the trucks. He said police also found the identification cards of two police officers at the windshield of the two vehicles. Mabel Zamora, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Marinduque calls for help

CLEMAR CITY—An internet website has been created to solicit help for the victims of Typhoon Yolanda that is sweeping town the province on Sept. 6. Typhoon Reming. The website, http://helpmarinduque.yolanda.ph, has translations of destruction in the island province left by Reming. "Electricity will not be restored for weeks or even months. Life without for the same again in Marinduque. We need your donations of cash, medicines and other items, and tents, and other relief goods in order to help as many people as possible," said part of the message posted on the website. Donations received may be routed to the residence of Marinduque Gov. Carmencita Reyes at 1268 Bantay Road, Barangay Balo Village, Makati City or through Singles for Christ South Hub 8 Diaz-Lopez Street Alabang 4004 Muntinlupa. Cash donations can be deposited to PNB Bank Savings account of Romeo Mendiola (chief of staff of Governor Reyes). On Reming, the province bore the brunt of a direct hit from Reming, which destroyed or damaged up to 80 percent of all houses in the province. The Department of Social Welfare and Development reported that more than 45,000 families were affected in the municipalities of Boac, Mogpog, Sta. Cruz, and Torrijos. Joella Wallen/Jr. Inquirer Southern Luzon

City mayors to send money to 'Reming' victims

By David Isreal Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—A GROUP OF THE country's city mayors agreed to send financial aid to seven provinces hit by supertyphoon Reming in the Bicol region.

Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, head of the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), said the league would set aside financial aid to the areas hit by the typhoon after it saw all pieces of information on the damages.

Treñas arrived Tuesday from Bangkok where he represented the country for the second policy forum on urban environmental management in Southeast Asia.

He said the LCP is now assessing all areas in the Bicol region to determine the financial assistance that will be extended to the local government units.

According to Treñas, Iriga City Mayor Madelaine Gazmen and Legaspi City Mayor Noel Rosal had informed him about the devastation left by the typhoon in their respective areas.

The LCP usually provides P50,000 to donation to areas affected by a calamity, he said.

Other donors who gave money for victims of the mudslides were businessman Eddy Co, owner of the Mobile Resort in Albay who gave P500,000 for survivors of the mudslides in Padang Village and the Ople Foundation that gave relief goods to the villagers.

LCP Executive Officer Francis Cruz said the league gave financial assistance to the landslide victims of Barangay Guinsegan, Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte, through the office of Gov. Roger Mercado.

The LCP also released P50,000 to Guinsaugon after the Aug. 11 Presidential gift. The Iloilo City government also donated 250 bales of rice.

However, Treñas said he would recommend a bigger amount due to the extent of the damage in the Bicol region.

He said the Iloilo City government would set part of its calamity fund to help. The city government has P34.39 million in its calamity fund.

Treñas also said that the LCP would not hold its general assembly and renewed meeting to save funds and donate those instead to the victims of the calamity.

Lawyers' group asks PNP to solve judge's slay

COTABATO CITY—THE INTEGRATED Bar of the Philippines (IBP) chapter here has challenged police and military authorities to work for the early resolution of the assassination of Judge Intrans Silongan.

Silongan, judge of the regional trial court branch 15 here, was driving his family when assassins ambushed and executed-style-riding gunmen on Saturday.

He with his wife was injured while two other family members were wounded.

The suspects, Jomarville Abas and Umbra Mohammad, were arrested according to Chief Supt. German Doria, Central Mindanao police chief.

In a resolution, the IBP Cotabato chapter also condemned the ambush-slaying of Silongan. They expressed fear it could go unsolved like other cases of killings in the city including the October ambush-slaying of lawyer Israel Dandoon, noted land manager of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"We as young and a good man, the death deserves justice," Judge Bantuan Ibrahim of RTC Branch 13 said of Silongan.

Silongan was known for his straight-forward and uncompromising decisions to provide justice, according to IBP Cotabato past President Samuel Fontanilla.

"It would be unfair if justice is denied to a just man like him," Fontanilla said.

Doria said the IBP could help the police build on a tight case against Abas and Ando.

He said as in the Dandoon case, the assassination of Silongan was also carried out by guns for hire.

"Several angles are being looked into as probable motives but we are putting more weight on personal grudge as the possible angle," he said.

In Manila, Silongan's colleagues launched late last week a signature campaign asking President Benigno Aquino to intervene for a speedy resolution of the murders of Mayor George Sabio.

In the petition, the students of Mabini also asked Mr. Aquino to direct the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to speed up the prosecution of those responsible for Sabio' death.

Sabio was well-loved by his constituents for his dedication to service.

Under his leadership, Mabini reaped numerous awards in good governance, environment protection, and manpower and development.

"We the people, children and friends of Mabini, join the Sabio family in seeking speedy justice for our beloved Mayor George Sabio," the petition said. Charlie Delance and Aquiles Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao

OUTSTANDING STUDENTS Vice President Mel de Castro witnesses the turnover of the check donated by the Rotary Club Midtown Quezon City for Lyndon for the Vice President's Medal for Career Outstanding Student. Standing (from left) are Baguio City Vice Mayor Leandro Yangot Jr., education regional director Benito G. Tamayao, lawyer Jose Andres, Education Secretary Jesli Lapus and architect Lito Pedoa, president of Rotary Club Midtown QC District 3780.

DENR, gov't execs squatting on watershed

BAGUIO CITY—THE GOVERNment has been compelled to demolish houses located inside the city's primary watershed, after acquiring reports that Department of Environment and Natural Resources officials allegedly own many of these structures, acting Mayor Bernardo Fontaine said on Monday.

He said the DENR officials were named in a fact-finding by the Bantay Watershed Task Force, an inter-municipal undertaking between Baguio and neighboring La Trinidad town in Benguet, which the watershed covers.

Government-owned Mgen Lim represents DENR at the task force. The Baguio Water District, which has the franchise to distribute water in the city, is also represented in the task force.

Among the officials identified in the task force list are a retired DENR regional director, a government accountant and officials of retired military generals.

Last week, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes placed on preventive suspension several DENR officials in Baguio for allegedly conspiring to sell a public road.

But the list implicating more DENR officials has not been verified, said Councilor Rodolfo Bulquerin, chair of the advocacy group Baguio Beginning Movement (BBM).

"We have always been fearing stories that DENR officials are behind the expanding Upside Down[1], so I always advised the city government to immediately demolish those structures," he said.

Bulquerin, a former city prosecutor, said equating "it is a continuing crime," so nothing prevents the city government from doing its duty.

Augusto Lagsac, officer-in-charge of the DENR Cordillera office, said the agency has formed a team to determine the veracity of the Bantay list.

Lagsac, regional technical director of the DENR Forest Management Service, said he supervised a DENR delineation panel to determine Busol's boundaries until it was recently demolished.

He said mapping out the watershed's boundaries is a project intensified by pandemonium.

By measuring the extent of the watershed, DENR will offer local officials data that will be necessary for them to determine how their plans to rehabilitate Busol, he said.

He said some government officials may have assumed that lands excluded from Busol by virtue of the survey would end up available for sale.

The new regime says they are sensitive to the DENR mapping project, he said. Eleanor Gibironas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

CALENDAR ART
The line works of art of Bacolod City-based painter Jovito Baldivia will appear in a 2007 calendar to be launched on Dec. 14, 4 p.m. at the Arts on Figueroa Art Gallery at 296 Don Gil Garcia St., Cebu City. The artworks, entitled "Pandarong Lumog Pinoy," are shown in pastel.

BAGUIO YULETIDE PREPARATIONS

Warm weather threatening to thaw 'snow show'

BAGUIO CITY—WARM YULEing Mayor Bernardo Fontaine is tide weather is threatening to thaw the "snow show" that Baguio and some cities here from the business community have plans to shower downtown Baguio with snow-making factories by machines from snow city meetings.

According to Fontaine's plan, the "snow show" will convene every evening once the busiest season picks up. The summer capital receives the most tourists during the Christmas holidays.

But for the crisp snow eyes, like to linger in the air, the downtown temperature must be at least 10 degrees Celsius, Fontaine was told.

"The snow should at least last more than five seconds," he said here during the opening month's flag ceremonies at City Hall on Monday.

The city temperature must last month has ranged from a low of 13 degrees Celsius to down to a high of 21 degrees Celsius (a) noon.

Weather has been unpredictable since the El Niño phenomenon set in this year, said Joseph Pino, chief meteorologist of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (Pagasa) weather station.

"The temperature extreme climate variables. So making or modeling snow have weatherbuy or temperature input laboring with or gobs (it is cold at 20mm. How it warms up at noon. And then it cools down again at night). It is hard to come up with accurate forecasts under these circumstances, "he said.

Weather forecasts also predict a hard storm hitting the city before the year ends, "and this is expected but how cold the city will become," he said.

El Niño is an unusual warming of sea temperatures, which occurs in a cycle of two to seven years.

Weather experts have said wishing Supertyphoon "Reming" had been considering because El Niño conditions affect on the storm's behavior.

Threats weather stations forecast the storm dumping near Baguio, but the next day are snow-making forming around Mayo Mascis, and it finally hit southern Philippines," he said.

"... The backup plan is to shower the city with soapsuds, but that will require environmental clearance ... And soap will definitely make the roads slippery..."

VETERAN CIVIC leader Marcos Pedilla (second his old 'Lee' to out to welcome about 1,000 schoolchildren who participated in the annual Globo ng Pasko parade in Baguio City. The Globo is the city's way of launching Christmas events in the summer capital. December and January is Baguio's peak tourist season.

The likelihood that the summer capital will experience a dip in temperatures by the Christmas weekend is low, he said.

But he clarified that Baguio residents experience temperatures as low as 10 to 12 degree Celsius during the last days of the year or between January and February the hottest.

"In Baguio will become very chilly during the late evenings, yet still enjoyable very humid humid hours," he said.

Binaldea said he has fixed the date of the "snow show" on Christmas week in advance, hoping for temperatures to accommodate snow.

"The city council has offered me a plan B, but I am not too keen about it. The backup plan is to shower the city with soapsuds, but that will require environmental clearance now that it uses chemicals. And soap will definitely make the roads slippery," he said. Eleanor Gibironas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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Novaliches	Dec. 16 - 2 & 4pm
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Church population plan stupid–Duterte

DAVAO CITY—MAYOR RODRIGO DUterte has called the rumored population control measures being espoused by the Catholic Church as stupid.

"The population control program of the Church is stupid. It is not it all working. It has been there for and ten of for many years but what?" Duterte, who has been known for his fiery remarks on abortion, said.

Speaking during his weekly television program aired on ABS-CBN here, Duterte cited as example the rhythm method, which is one of the natural birth control methods being pushed by the Catholic Church.

He said it has not helped in slowing population growth.

"Just to an instance. It's natural for man to have sex. And this instead is something that cannot be stopped by counting the days of the calendar and then after working that sex time day you do it," Duterte said.

He said what the country needs is a serious move to reduce the rate of population growth, which he said should be blamed for the poverty many Filipinos are suffering from.

The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) has projected that the country's population for 2006 would reach 87 million from 2000's 76.5 million.

Duterte said the Catholic hierarchy should rethink its position on population control.

He said artificial ways of preventing pregnancy is not against the sanctity of life.

"There is nothing wrong about preventing women's fertilization. What we resist is to prevent unwanted pregnancy. We prevent women from getting pregnant," Duterte said.

But he clarified that he was against abortion.

During the 1st International Meeting of Experts on Emergency Contraception here last week, Duterte also publicly expressed opposition to the anti-abortionist being promoted by the Church.

He said the vote of ordinary living observed by Catholic priests only entitled many to become "instructors."

The Catholic Church, he said, also made sex dirty and cheap.

In Bangkok, Thailand, a visiting United Nations official admitted that the strong opposition from the Catholic Church has been hampering population control programs in the Philippines.

G. Bradley, head of the country technical services team for East and South East Asia of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), said during a discussion on population and social dynamics with the Inffocus-ISI 2006 Fellows that the agency could not stand against the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

"UNFPA is having a hard time working in programs in the Philippines because of the strong objection of the Church on family planning," he said.

Aglipay Sapao and Judy Ipalna, reporters Mindanao

Students told: Help in war on graft

BAGUIO CITY—PRO Archdiocesan Social Action Center (Sacac) director Monsignor Meliton Oro urged high-school and college student leaders from different high schools and colleges here to help fight corruption in government.

Oro issued the call during Thursday's founding of the Operation Red Plow, a campaign initiated by the Office of the Ombudsman that aims to stop the misuse of government resources by retailers in the run of government activities outside of their official functions.

Oro, who is also the chair of Project Graduwards, said corruption could be reduced if not eradicated, only with the help of the citizens.

"If we only depend on the Ombudsman, we cannot eradicate corruption," Oro said.

OIC Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Virginia Palmes Gonzalez also sought the support of the student body. Operation Red Plow, David Head Bong, Inquirer Visayas

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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Baguio's Olympics of spirit

THIS series of woodcut art stretched over a basement wall at the Baguio Convention Center is produced by Baguio artist Leonard Aguinaldo.

By Elizabeth Lolarga
Lowlander

The summer capital bids for the site of the 2007 Delphic Games

BUSLOADS OF STUDENTS AND walk-in tourists are getting off at the Baguio Convention Center to view a wide-ranging art exhibition that is part of Wow Philippines Delphic Festival 2006. The exhibition ends on Dec. 9.

In the past, the Department of Tourism in Baguio sponsored a number of trade fairs, but the city is also known for artists so why not put up a showcase for their works?

The event is a kickoff to the Delphic Games, counterpart of the Olympic Games, according to Dodot Jiaureins, president of the International Delphic Council. Just Take arts and culture. While the Olympics celebrate the body through games and sports, the Delphic Games acknowledge the human spirit.

Lisa Ann Tegan, fine arts professor at the University of the Philippines Baguio and overall festival coordinator, observed "a longer viewing session for this kind of activity."

She called for a meeting of mainstream nonprofit organizations, like the Tam-awan artists, Shilong Bontok, Baguio Arts Guild, Cooperg Tandil and the artists of the Vince Dueyas Community Art Space. Surprisingly, they all showed up and cooperated.

Painter Nicknel Rey-an of the Tam-awan said the organizers' enthusiasm was "contagious."

Milagros Lopez, exhibit coordinator, said the big problem spirit prevailed with some group members going out of their way to explain individualistic artists to send their works. And they did.

Some, like Fernando Fee who did pastels inspired by Picasso and Matisse, Tacoma Bacia who concentrated on flora like an orchid and a broomflod, and Danielle Pharmido, teamed up with the all-male Tabong Bontok drama Mariano, Romulo Dampic, Lacnay Donnedilla, Joe Abawag, Fredrik Palisi and Norman Chow) to present works in assorted media.

The more established artists included Leonard Aguinaldo with his 2D3 pieces of mahogany on paper titled "Museum Piles," Jordan Wong-eam and his solar paintings of harvest and planting rituals, Kidlat Tahimik with his serigraphy of the Philippine-American war, Nena Aquinaldo and his wistful rendition of his musical pieces of Baguio, and Tommy Sotelo and his emotions rifts and reflections toned silver prints of Cordillera forests.

Kasmyan de Guia's thought-provoking installation chair space with the works of painters who are starving their canvas, like Juan Alcazar who experimented with acrylic on tire tracks. Poet David Magno who used oil on cloud for startlingly realistic portraits of a Cool dong girl and a Badjao woman. Bo Rocker who painted her self-portrait surrounded by symbols of the cosmos, and Anthony Mallari with his oil pastels on jute sacks of local coconut products.

Lopez said "a healing ecstatic between two artistic groups that had a rift with the convention center."

Lawyer Jimmy Respecio Jr., founder of the yearly Panagbenga Festival, was so impressed with the exhibit that gathered almost 100 artists that he invited the National Delphic Council to organize a similar art event in the flower fest in February.

The winners of the art contest are:

Painting — Fleshmate Tilton, first prize; Rowena Quinto-Rosete PC second; and Edmund Andrada, third. Photography — Michael John Noble, first; and Ramon Christ Ocampo III, second.

The Delphic Festival included screenings of films Kuratanas, Charlie Chaplin, Great Serenade and Joseph Stella Shin, artists' talks, dance performances by the Neo-Imacon troupe with costumes by Kajo Lazard, and the "Himnay ng Kalikasan" fashion show using ecological fibers.

The officers of the council will go to Serbia next month to bid for the Philippines, specifically Baguio, as site of the Delphic Games in 2007. The games were last held in Malaysia in 2003.

The current festival is scattered a three-to-hexand if not the three venues when the entire Baguio is turned into an arts village.

'Duman' fest unifies town

By Tonnie Orejas
Jos. Rita, Pampanga

MANU LOTS OF PEOPLE, masarap (so tasty), masaya (so high spirits). When the 74-year-old Cristina Zapanta used these words to describe the 5th Duman Festival in San Rita, Pampanga, on Dec. 2, she was not exaggerating.

From where this master maker of durian fashion rice candy held court under a makeshift pathdwarf (where the pounding of the grains took place) beside the stage, there and out before her around 7,000 people on Saturday night when the sun was getting cold.

To their right, the centuries-old San Rita de Cascia Church loomed dark, except in the glittered nook where the image of the town's patron saint was lit by a faint bulb.

At the fringes were more than 50 stalls, their tables filled with all sorts of native foods.

In the flurry of eating, a small solid bullet with wood handles and coconut shell cups that durian makers said kept the temperature constant and prevented the rice from burning.

When Tony Pineda, musical director of the Artillas, Rita, recited her poem in praise of the durian makers and farmers, one sprang a repertoire of old and modern Kapampangan music, including the signature song "Duman."

To them, the more than 50 homegrown artists aged 10 to 50 sang, danced and acted. They were trained by Miss Saggan Hemogenes-phot Indy Rita, a native of the town.

Rib-rubbing and wet-indexing, the songs evoked a sentimental journey to a life that was simpler, when the farms were beautiful and the Sta. Rita of old was only a crossing to the metropolis but overnight that was dangerous and the cultural capital that was Bacolor.

At the pathdwarf, cries of men and women gathered around the young inventor L. happily pounding their along (pestle) to produce more durian.

The event was not only a durian festival. It was also a food fair as it is a cultural night.

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Dark, silent Christmas for Bicol typhoon victims

From page A1

director of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), said power was set to be restored in Naga City today and in Legazpi City by Dec. 16 and to the entire region by Dec. 25.

Bicol Electric Cooperative restoring power in Albay (It powered all the province was still without power a month after the late typhoon "Milenyo" struck) when burning toppled electric poles, transformers and power stations.

History's worst typhoon

Burning also severely damaged Bicol's office, equipment, trucks and service vehicles, according to Reuters.

"Now, we do not even know where to start answering the damage. This was the worst typhoon in history," Reuters said.

Civil defense officials interviewed 9,161 dead, mostly around Mayon Volcano, and another 799 missing.

The Civil defense office said the typhoon and the mudslides destroyed or damaged 250,000 houses and affected 1.34 million people, nearly 60,000 of whom had sought refuge at evacuation centers.

It put the cost of the damage to buildings, infrastructure and agriculture at P1.3 billion.

Villagers are downing water from wells and are eating pumps. The Department of Health Bicol has deployed teams to the region to prevent water chlorination. Power-purifying plants have been put up in some areas, according to the DCD.

Since the typhoon struck, people had been going around Legazpi looking for potable water in the few water refilling stations open. After finding one, they still had to join the long queue of thirsty buyers.

People were also queueing when buying food supplies, still for tobacco, gasoline, medicine and liquefied petroleum gas.

Gasoline shortage

Only one gasoline station was open in Legazpi and not all of its pumps were working.

Motorists still had to drive to neighboring Daraga town, where three stations were open.

The gasoline shortage participated more than 10 percent of the public utility vehicles.

Communication was still a problem, in the entire Bicol, only one mobile network was working. Some days after flooding stopped.

Transportation routes to Naga City and Legazpi were toppled, paralyzing the operations of most radio stations.

Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzalez complained about the slow clearing of highways and roads by the Department of Public Works and Highways, saying this he saw only one bulldozer doing the job. The DPWH vowed to finish road-clearing operations by Friday.

Hospital damaged

Sorsogon remained without electricity and all communications facilities were still down. No casualty was reported but houses, buildings and crops were damaged.

On the island province of Catanduanes, almost farming south in landfall, 34,933 houses were destroyed and 17,250 were damaged, according to Gov. Leandro Verceles.

Damage to agriculture and infrastructure was placed at P370.8 million.

Verceles estimated the damage to the operating room of the Eastern Bicol Medical Center in Virac at P10 million.

Financial assistance

Wearing a black-colored blouse, Ms. Arroyo commiserated with victims in Bicolano, Camarines Sur and Catanduanes, Albay. She carried young evacuees in her arms.

The President gave some hospital families P5,000 for each fatality and distributed relief goods.

Aida Tolores of Barangay Bialayan in Daraga thanked the President for the "gift," saying it would go a long way in helping her rebuild her life.

Tolores lost 6 men after torrents of mud from the slopes of Mayon swallowed their house.

In Bicolano, Sheriflen Lamoste, 47 said her house was destroyed and that she hoped she could be provided some financial assistance to start rebuilding her home. But she said she was also very happy that the President came to visit them.

Lamoste said she also wished the President could help them resold their lives by providing them assistance to start a small store. She said their small store and their house were gone.

Encourage

Others like Arroyo came to her. Lamoste could only smile and would not say anything but accept the plastic bag with relief goods handed to her.

Mr. Arroyo's three-helicopter entourage arrived at the Philippine Navy Authority office in Bicolano at 10:30 a.m. and left for Albay at 11:30 a.m.

The team was accompanied by Vice President Noli de Castro, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr., her son Dato Arroyo and Gov. de Venecia.

Budget Secretary Rolando estimates Jr. said the P1 billion ordered released by the President for the hardest-hit areas was already available to cash.

Andaya said the P1 billion was an "initial release, just to "normalize" the situation and to respond to the basic needs of the victims like food and electricity.

"The good thing right now is that we have sufficient cash to cover all the necessary funding requirement, so there would be no problem," he said.

Fuel, medicine from Indonesia

The country continues to receive aid from other countries.

At first light yesterday, two C-130 transport aircraft from Indonesia touched down in Legazpi, carrying more than 12 tons of food and medicine.

A small team of Spanish firemen set up a field hospital nearby for the injured survivors.

Other pledges of support include:

- ★ $200,000 from the Chinese government.
- ★ $100,000 from South Korea.
- ★ A total of 1,518 tents, 9000 rolls of plastic sheets, 60 packs of sleeping mattresses, and 20 sets of 220 generators from the Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- ★ Relief supplies worth P30,000, including medicine, food, blankets and tents, from Singapore.
- ★ A total of P2.4 million from Mountaintops City for Calabanga and Siruma towns in Camarines Sur, and Cebu, Cebu, Mandaluyong.
- ★ An unspecified amount from the League of Cities of the Philippines. (See Page A17)
- ★ P200,000 from the Regional Development Council in Eastern Visayas.

World Vision, an international Christian relief and development organization, has rushed to assessment of the tragedy and has rallied support among its in-to-national offices worldwide.

For its part, the International Red Cross has launched a $7.3-million emergency appeal to help the Philippines.

Search operations extended

Ms Arroyo ordered the extension of the search and retrieval operations for 10 days to December 15 to help support City Daraga and Guinobatan.

"The search for victims must continue as we tend to the sick and hungry in the evacuation centers, but we must now also push on the search for permanent solutions looming upon the root cause of these grave calamities," she added.

But Daniel Fernandez, a member of the Spanish search and rescue team INSH, said "the search for life is over."

Some 8,000 the health department announced during their stay will linger to help deal with the dead. Many unclaimed bodies have been buried in shallow graves but many more are still lying unrecovered, inhibit reports from Marilyn B. Up to 1,000 in Cam. Sur and Albay and buried Sleep, Inquirer Bicolano

RAISE OF MUD and volcanic ash that covered this road out of a village in Legazpi City are now being cleared by bulldozers. AFP

Man, 2 sons adrift for 18 hours saved by boat seat

From page A1

and Ando, 24, and Benito Benito Jr., 18—all residents of Barangay Hillabertson in Sagay—kept on grasping on wreckage all through the night of Thursday when they were carried away by strong winds and waves from the seashore.

Thinking the typhoon was over, the four tried to maneuver the boat owned by the Dagpils through the water to a safe place on the shore at about 12:30 p.m.

After a few minutes, strong winds struck, accompanied by a heavy rain that somehow prevented them from landing on the shore.

All of a sudden, strong waves engulfed them and the wounded boat, carrying them away from the shore.

The four helplessly drifted at sea, with their lives at the mercy of waves, until they found a wooden seat from the boat that they had tried to save.

Floated

"We held tightly to the seat and used it as a float," Dagpil said. While at sea for 18 hours, they prayed hard for their recovery.

Fatigue, hunger and imminent of hopelessness gripped them all throughout their ordeal as rumors surrounded the wreath.

"We took turns in keeping ourselves afloat by using our hands. We ate whatever things we found that could be eaten," Dagpil recalled.

He said he and his companions caught fish that came into contact with their wounded bodies and ate them.

At about 6 a.m., Friday the typhoon subsided.

Dagpil and his companions found themselves off the shore of Barangay Caridiem, San Andres, Catanduanes.

Happy but very weary, they were home on Saturday, taking an SUV. Shipping line vessel that arrived at the Virac Seaport terminal around 4 p.m. the same day.

'God is great'

Dagpil's wife Beverly, who had earlier informed their relatives that her husband, two sons and brother were missing, said had lost hope of finding them alive, was so surprised and cried aloud when she learned that they all survived and were about to return home on Sunday.

"God is great!" she said.

But their "second life," the Dagpils will be holding a celebration with a thanksgiving Mass in the village.

They have invited all their neighbors and friends. Five large pigs will be butchered, Dagpil said.

How 2 men escaped from Catanduanes by land and sea

From page A1

the drivers Liel Abang and radio-announcer Ronald Calderon, who arrived in Virac on June 28 after walking for around four-to-five hours. Both Catanduanes on the receiving end of fingerprinters "thrashing" a week-to-days later.

With gusts reaching 265 kilometers per hour, flaming roofs included in Catanduanes on June 30, pummeling the province for hours.

Abang and Calderon were in a house 500 meters away from the job site at the foot of a hill in Barangay Iris, Nibo when the typhoon struck.

"The doors and windows were shut, but we could still hear the howling wind. It was so loud that we did not even realize the electricity had already gone off," Abang said.

When the typhoon finally calmed down at around 7 p.m. on Nov. 30, Abang and Calderon went to the house of Barangay Captain Ernesto Iris, a friend.

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2-M construction wasted

There they found more than a year of construction work (worth about P2 million) wasted. The finished infrastructure and idles were broken and strewn around. The storage area had lost its roof, and the second-story ceiling had crashed.

"We're thankful nobody was hurt. We learned the ceiling crashed just minutes after the workers had left the second floor," Abang said.

But what was surprising, he added, was that the debris were found meters away from where they should have landed. "That's how strong the wind was," he said.

Outside, Calderon saw felled coconut trees which were "like toothpicks" scattered.

He also saw galvanized iron roofing sheets wrapped around the topmost parts of jeli trees, which were about as tall as coconut trees.

Huddled family members were seen sitting outside their house, which no longer had a roof. A steel structure for a garden was almost ruined out of its foundation. A truck carrying fruits and vegetables lay on its side at the middle of the road. The hills, which used to be green, were reduced to big brown mounds.

No buses, planes

The following day Abang went to the San Andres pier at 7 a.m. to make reservations for the telephone. He found the offices would be closed, but was shocked to discover the offices were no longer there.

He also checked out the Asian Spirit to see if there were available flights out of there, but learned that flights had been suspended because of unfavorable weather conditions.

Abang, Calderon and their coworkers' only hot was the ferry MV Cultura II, which was scheduled to leave the pier at 1 p.m.

On the way back to his colleagues, Abang witnessed how Virac residents tried to bring life back to normal.

"People were lining up at hardware stores to buy tools and iron sheets, hoping to fix their damaged houses. There were many people at barbecue stores that is grocery shops because had already had canned pork to dry matters their houses. Some pinatubos were even open," Abang recalled.

By land and sea

When the group arrived to pay-ment on the San Andres pier at around 10:30 a.m., the ferry was filled with people, most of whom were standing, and was already set to leave.

Once the ferry dropped down off at Talmco pier in Albay, they took a series of tricycle and jeepney rides which ended when they reached the Iris house in Nibo.

There they witnessed the overpowering nature of some Albay residents, who offered to carry them across the river for P50 each.

When they reached Legazpi, Albay, the workers took a two-hour jeepney ride toward Naga City to Caramoan Sur. There, at 8:30 p.m., they were finally able to get a bus ride to Metro Manila.

At 4:30 a.m. the following day the buried workers were safe home.

While, understandably, could not be said about thousands of Catanduanes residents who had lost their houses.

Images of utter despair move veteran photojournalist to tears

From page A1

scars how different—how destructive—Reming was compared to other similar disasters he covered, including the Southern Leyte killer landslide in February.

Unlike many of the country's past disasters wherein survivors were able to find a safe, untouched territory after nature's rake or iron, Reming's aftermath is literal unmatched in other seven hellscapes for the thousands of people who fled the torrents of mud and rocks that eventually buried their homes.

Describing what his camera may have missed while scanning from a helicopter or his cramped vehicle last week, Bassman could still vividly recall vignettes of despair:

Shots of despair

- ★ A woman sitting by the road, next to a three-foot image of Christ, Nibo which she had apparently managed to rescue from her house. "The Sto. Niño was already naked."
- ★ An army of "body pants" strewn around a town plaza for waiting to be identified.
- ★ The corpse of a woman and the infant she was still suckling.
- ★ Motorists huddled by the road and shaking some (recount) liquor, apparently just too drained to start repairing any things on their cars.
- ★ A grotto of the Virgin Mary which "miraculously" emerged as the only structure left standing amid a flattened neighborhood.
- ★ A woman holding a spoon—"the one sure it was her spoon"—on top of her concealed two-story house.
- ★ A man managing to save his computer from his room by wading chest-deep through the mud of his house, the only part of the structure that was still above ground.
- ★ Families huddling makeshift tents as dusk approached, as the spots where they thought their homes stood covered less beneath.
- ★ Some of the more fortunate family as night finally came, thanks to candles and kerosene lamps. Others just disappeared in the dark.

Subject talks

But Bassman says there was one photo-shoot in Barangay Bagas, Daraga town in Albay that he'll never settling up. This was when the subject inside the frame did more than just mural ability determined.

Comprehension

"The importance of the sun is that it is sensitive very only on in some psychiatric and neurologically-active drugs," Pantelis said.

He hoped the test, which is currently only used in research, would become established as a clinical tool as a result of the team's work.

Smell test developed to determine insanity

From page A1

A University of Melbourne team of researchers said they had discovered a link between a declining sense of smell and dementia such as as schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

In a test conducted by health provider Melbourne Health, 91 young subjects at risk of becoming psychotic were shown a series of 40 cards when smell they had to match up with a list of four odors, such as coffee, rose, orange and petrol.

The researchers found that those who latter were to be diagnosed with mental illness had 60% only identifying more than half the odors.

Clinton Pantelis, from the university's Melbourne Neuropsychiatry Centre, said that was because such conditions could affect the frontal lobe, the area of the brain used to analyze and identify smells.

"It is obvious that areas of smell is may involve a problems in this thinking area of the brain," he told Agence France Presse.

In the young people who had not yet become ill, the test was able to pick up an impairment in normal development, Pantelis said.

At the other end of the spectrum, the test could help diagnose diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Parkinsons' diseases, in which frontal lobe

Scientists, however, cautioned that the research and smell tests could not conversely predict later problems on its own, and merely compile, assisted other tests used by clinicians.

"But hope this will be a test that will become more available and will help doctors diagnose," he said.

AFP

US tells RP: Give us Smith until judicial process completed

From page A1

secretary for special concerns, told a press briefing that the DFA received the note we had shortly before noon.

In the document, the US Embassy said it "reaffirms the right of the United States military authorities to exercise custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction until completion of all judicial proceedings, notably in the ongoing legal case of ... Smith."

The DFA said Daniel's asset a copy of the diplomatic note at past 5 p.m.

In the transmittal letter signed by Ingrid A. Delk of Daniel's assistant of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement giving US authorities custody over an servicemen facing criminal proceedings to Philippine courts.

Seguis told the court: "The department wishes to assure you of its continuing cooperation in this matter."

According to Seguis, the note verbale is a reiteration of the US Embassy's earlier position on the custody issue from the very beginning of the rape case.

The four Marines were actually in the embassy's custody for the duration of the trial.

"Mr. Smith may be transferred to the custody of the United States authorities only upon the authority of the court," Seguis said.

Supt. Serafin Barayoga Jr., bureau of Jail Management and Penology regional director, told reporters that "if the judge orders that Smith should be transferred to a different detention center, we will follow."

Earlier in the day, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., a professor of the University of the East College of Law told the Inquirer that US authorities should ask the Makati court to give them continued custody over Smith if they wanted to hold him while his conviction was under appeal.

"They should ask the Makati court for this relief. If the (Philippine) government will just turn him over to them, then it will not be looking after its own interest," Pimentel, a former executive director of the Presidential Commission on the VFA, said in a phone interview.

And if the court grants US authorities custody over the convict pending the Supreme Court ruling on the finality of the verdict of life imprisonment against him, he should be held by a facility other than the US Embassy, Valdez said.

Sleepless night

Holding Smith at the US Embassy "would be unacceptable because the embassy is no longer Philippine territory" the law dean said. "How can you verify the circumstances of the convict if he's being kept in the embassy? Daniel need to go through diplomatic channels for that."

In the jail statement with other suspects of all stripes, the 21-year-old Smith spent a sleepless night as the lone detainee in a cell given him for security considerations.

"Considering what he went through, he looks all right, but he told me that he hardly slept, that he didn't sleep well," said Darius Upchurch, counsel for Smith's co-accused Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis, who was acquitted along with Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter.

Duplantis, Silkwood and Carpenter were flown back to their military unit, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa, Japan, hours after Perez acquitted them of conspiring with Smith to rape "Nicole" before midnight on Nov. 1, 2005.

Smith was left behind, handcuffed and brought to the MCC in Perez's orders.

Smith was dressed in a white shirt, a pair of shorts and slippers when jail guards led him to a room to meet Upchurch yesterday morning.

While he was not given a time limit for his visit, the lawyer said he spoke with the Muslim for less than an hour.

"I was not allowed to his quarters. I was just led to a room and they brought him there. I spent a longer time to get through security ... Security was very strict and they really checked me," Upchurch said, adding:

"He just said he's glad I took the time to visit him. I tried to cheer him up, and there were moments that he smiled, though I don't know if he just did that because he knew I was really trying to cheer him up."

High level of security

Upchurch said he did not know where Smith had spent the night.

But the jail warden, Supt. Delvin Destro, said Smith was separated from the rest of the 6,344 inmates.

Destro denied reports that Smith, the only inmate in the jailhouse for accused felons facing trial, was being given special treatment.

"My general statement is there is no VIP treatment given to him. It's just that the level of security for him is different. He is in the jail service area with [guards] from the SJMP Order unit."

US Embassy people were seen entering the MCC even before visiting hours began at 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

It was unclear whether such an accommodation fell under a jailhouse rule spelled out on a note hanging on the entry gate: "Visitation schedules are subject to change without prior notice as the situation may arise."

Seguis said the DFA was coordinating with the Department of Justice "on the matter, including the Philippines' compliance with its treaty obligations."

He said that under Article 9, paragraph 4 of the VFA, "the custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with United States military authorities, if they so request from the commission of the offense until the completion of all judicial proceedings."

Said Emma Bunoan, executive director of the VFA Commission, in a phone interview: "The issue was already settled when the embassy had custody of the US servicemen when the prosecution was made and before the warrant of arrest was issued. Judge Perez 'remitted' it [with the order to bring Smith to the MCC] kaya wala [so] there is the embassy's argument [that's why there is the confusion]."

Paredes stood by the earlier statement he made over radio station dzRH that Perez's order for Smith to be held at the MCC was "a violation of the provisions of the VFA."

"It was tantamount to abuse of discretion. It should have been status quo," he told dzRH.

He said the custody issue was no longer "debatable" because it was "very clear" in the VFA that custody of Smith would remain with US authorities until the "final communication" of the case by the Supreme Court.

No specified period

"The earlier that the note verbale is answered, the better," Paredes said.

He said that as it was during the trial, Philippine authorities would ensure that Smith remained in the Philippines even while under US custody while the decision was on appeal.

The VFA does not say if there is a period within which the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court should decide on an appeal, unlike in the trial which should be completed within a year, he said.

Asked by the lawyers if the custody issue was among the provisions that exempted how the Philippines appeared when the law, he responded the VFA, Paredes said: "I believe so."

He cited the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (with existing that after a case had been filed against US military personnel, the Japanese government automatically got custody of the accused.

"The links is a good model. But for us, we have to wait until the case is decided with finality by the Supreme Court before we can have custody," Paredes said.

For his part, Seguis said the VFA could be subject to a review. But he said Smith's case "should be finished first, and the custody issue settled, and then we can talk about the VFA."

But DFA spokesperson Ed Malaya, responding to the question of whether the VFA superseded the case regarding the custody issue, said: "The VFA does not supersede court authority. The VFA being a treaty is part of the law of the land. The courts interpret the laws of the land."

Smith's lead counsel

Jose Antonio Jr., counsel for Silkwood, yesterday filed an entry of appearance to inform the court that he has had been designated as Smith's lead counsel.

"I got a call [from a lawyer with] the US Marines who told me that Smith wants me to represent him. I said it's OK with me ... though there was no reason, for I am now the lead counsel of Smith's legal team," Antonio said over the phone.

But Benjamin Formoso, the lead lawyer who presented Smith's defense in court, said he had yet to be told to withdraw.

"But we told them that if they want us to withdraw, that was not a problem. That is the decision of the client and there is nothing we could do about it," Formoso said when reached for comment.

Antonio filed an urgent motion yesterday afternoon asking Perez to cancel his order committing Smith at the MCC and return the case records to the US custody.

The motion had the conformity of the DOJ.

Weeks's private lawyer, Evelyn Ursua, described the government's agreement as "a setback, a betrayal."

She said she would file an opposition to the motion today.

In a press conference in Quezon City Ursua also said: "The VFA does not supplant Philippine laws."

She said this case under the VFA, an American, Smith, was tried in a Philippine court. So he is a Philippine detention facility. With reports from Norman Bordadora, Jocelyn R. Uy and Ed Sip

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SPORTS

Medal within reach of bowlers

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—THE TRIUMVIRATE DE Pacing Supercenter, Teresa Cruggnaco and Charlene Yap-Lim sealed cop secured after the first three games in regular bowling's men's trios event at Hyatt Regency Sheraton and shot on the other twenty Tuesday for the 15th Asian Games here.

The upcoming team for a first medal in the Lucelino day.

But there is still much to look forward to for the undefeated 227-strong Philippine contingent as the Games entered within a win of a team bowler and 24 in their weight classes.

Lawrence stunners late Monday night by light flyweight Godfrey Castro, featherweight Aiza Tigtas and lightweight Jerome Bolambo couldn't have it better as they outbeads and condemned the debut Tuesday of super lightweight Jeffa Rebudio against a fourth Korean entry promoters.

Rebudio shrugged a stinging 12-11 loss to the hands of Han Myung-keun.

The 23-year-old Asian first-timer was the first Filipino boxer to enter the ring, ending a six-match wins the stinging top of the 10 Pro-ing squad at the Aspire Hall.

Supernumeraries, Cruggnaco and Ilag totaled 1,989 in the Gun, a score one pin behind Malaysia's Team 2 and eight ahead of Algeria's Team 1. The trio and three guests will be played Wednesday.

The four-line World Cup champion Supernumeraries rained a perfect three game to swing the second BP team with 746 pinfalls on strikes of 246, 196 and 204. Ilag and Cruggnaco scored a 644 and 645, respectively.

The BP Team 1 of Marbeth Inc. 12 Stores and Bluey Brews lay to 2006 spot their cause hurt by the 25th of 2006 World Cup champion Games.

Elsewhere, Cecil Mitchell dropped his second straight match as the BP squad bowled to second and Quinnie Tolgo, 13, and out of contention in the men's team tournament.

Mitchell bowed to Lo Ho-hsun, 6-2, 7-6, 4-6.

In the first match, Eric Tolosa yielded more five times and was ousted by Meng Hsiu-liang, 2-6, 2-6. Patrick John Tierro and Alfonso Arcilla were the team-supernatant doubles over Chen Ti-and Yi-Da-man, 7-6, 6-4.

Filipino hidden looked for on the monster tables as everyone—save Arcilla—lost. Arcilla—for Asia—lost their numbers to the kings, 1-3, at the Al-Sadd Multi-Purpose Hall.

Asian overseas Anwar Dendin, 47-20, before losing to Hiro Kanai Shoda, 21-79, and to Shoda and Ahmad Dzulfia, 12-61, in partnership with Alvin Pamaloy. Felipe Tinero Jr. bowed to Hiro Kanai Shoda, 27-68.

Cycling fell short of a medal as Marben Bimbo, the first to ride released at the starting time, settled for seventh place in the women's individual time trial with a time of 35 minutes and 23.98 seconds at the Al-Rhor Road Course. China's Li Meiling won the gold in 31:17.93.

Alvin Amposta and Mike Cordova advanced to the finals of the men's lightweight double sculls by finishing second to 3:44.25 minutes to South Korea's Kim Kyung-ju and Jae Sung-hoon (3:37.50).

The veteran pair of Ben-Hur Tolentino, a 1998 gold medalist in last year's double-sculls, and Arden Gusara, and Jose Rodriguez brought up the rear in their semifinal heat of the men's double-sculls and missed the medal race. Previously, they stayed 3:50.69 in the semi winner of Doha's West Bay Lagoon.

The disastrous swim-off began as Caroline Gonzales rushed up 3:40 with a score of 5:31 in the 50m pistol qualifying round shot at Qatar's Al Gharafa Club and Susan Ajanado settled for 26th with 558 to be 22nd place elimination round by Chan's Chong Ding (597). at the Rumeil Aquatic Centre.

Rumeil Lumaad-Dino finished second to Qatar's Amber Hamza in Heat 2 of the men's 200m butterfly at 2:0.13 seconds, just 0.22 of a second off the lead.

Late Sports

Doha 2006

Asian Games news and Sports stories on A29 to 32

Philippine-American Annie Walsh (26.02) was 48th in his heat of 50m butterfly, Erin Tolosa (27.51) was seventh in a field of eight in the 50m freestyle, Ayen Arabejo (1:08.27) was also seventh in the 100m backstroke, and Geraldo Cordero (1:17.30) came in last in the 100 breaststroke.

The 4X quarter of Kenneth Uy, Daniel Cordero, Walsh and Miguel Molkes advanced to the medal race after a fourth-place finish in the second of two heats of the 4x100m freestyle relay. The Filipinos stood 3:31.91, far behind the 3:21.35 of the winning Chinese squad.

Unbeaten favorite Chinese Taipei dealt Filipino hopes a fourth straight boxing: 15-1, in the 54-kg bout Sports (All).

Jessah Jones, Cedrick Gibson II produced the only victory for the Filipinos, winning 4-1, against the Maldives' Suresh Perdeen in the group stage of the men's singles.

Nelson Elarde was ended 4-6, by Chinese Taipei's Cheng Yen-chi, Dante Bikin by Jessah Jones' first Olympic foe, and after Michael Enriquez by Japan's Hikaru Shimohata.

SAN DIEGO of Magnolia (right) tosses over JR Quinahan of Mail and More. Quinahan had the last laugh, though as the Cornerstone Elders Spinners in their game yesterday

Big men spark Toyota; Mail and More scores

By Jaymar M. Pajo

PRESSING A SUPERIOR PERFORMER IN DIVE Rodriguez, the Toyota Otis Spanker clipped past the favored Hapbuca Gypsy Boy Mas-ters, 64-61, in the PBL Silver Cup yesterday at the Larvae Gym.

Rodriguez drilled in seven points in the final entry, including a crucial two-post basket that lifted the Aranks, 60-57, at the 1:40 mark.

"Our big men played so well," said Sparks coach Lonie Alas. "For the first time, we won in rebounding."

Rodriguez delivered for her performance this conference for a game-high 17 numbers and nine rebounds.

Marvin Cruz also outshined the Spanks edge by sinking three of four free throws in the last 22 seconds.

Earlier, the Mail and More Cornets battled to another big performance by JR Quinahan as a 47-38 triumph over the Magnolia Splinters.

Quinahan, coming off a 30-point performance versus Sista, steeled with 21 points, nine re-bounds, four blocks and two steals.

"He's proving to be the vital cog of the team," said Cornets coach Lawrence Chongson.

The Cornets built on a strong second-quarter charge behind Quinahan, Joel Cagulangan and Mon-ta Ellerbe for a 44-31 halftime spread.

Mail and More Johnny Ishmael Hakim at 12-6.

Tyson Otis and Hadrian Gatus wound up tied at 2-2 with Debonair Llanillo-Pena Bukidnon and Sinkfield.

Magnolia, a pre-season favorite after acquiring several collegiate stars, fell to 1-3.

The Spanks added Sinkfield after got the ax-perchance to his anticipated match up versus 6-foot-9 Nigerian Ime Ekon.

Elore finished with 13 numbers and 10 boards, but got little support from Magnolia's top guns.

Toyota
Final Score
Mail and More 61

Quarter: 16-12, 31-31, 47-47, 61-64

TOYOTA (64)—Rodriguez 17, Cruz 16, Dio 11, Gatdula 7, Bulanadi 4, Joel 3, Bankaduka 2, Cornwell 1, Sena 0, Ekwan 0, Antonio 0, Ramones 0, Pajarillo 0, Ramil 0

MAIL AND MORE (61)—Hakim 12, Gatus 10, Sinkfield 10, Ellerbe 9, Quinahan 8, Cagulangan 6, Ishmael 4, Llanillo 2, Pena 0, Bukidnon 0, Sinkfield 0, Ramos 0, Cruz 0

Quarter: 16-12, 31-31, 47-47, 61-64

TOYOTA (64)—Rodriguez 17, Cruz 16, Dio 11, Gatdula 7, Bulanadi 4, Joel 3, Bankaduka 2, Cornwell 1, Sena 0, Ekwan 0, Antonio 0, Ramones 0, Pajarillo 0, Ramil 0

MAGNOLIA (61)—Elore 13, Ishmael 10, Custodio 7, Chavez, Bonifacio 5, Gervacio 4, Aquino 3, Tagaan 2, Ishmael 2, Ramos 1, Mallonido 0, Mendoza 0, Ramirez 0

Quarter: 16-12, 31-31, 47-47, 61-64

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RP third in 'Bimp' Games

THE PHILIPPINES, represented by Team Mindanao, collected a total of 30 medals to place third among 12 home seven in the overall team tro-ph-ings in the second 7th Bimp-Eaga (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East Asean Growth Area) Games in Makassar, Indonesia.

Swimmer Hilm Bunsa was adjudged as the most outstanding Filipino athlete, winning five of the 12 gold medals hauled by Team Mindanao which ended third behind overall champion Sabah and South Sulawesi and improved its fourth place finish in the last edition of the biennial meet in Sabah, Malaysia. The country also won 12 silver and five bronze medals.

Bunsa, 18, a freshman student at the Notre Dame of Dadiangas University in General Santos City, dominated the field in the 200m free (2:00.96), 200m backstroke (2:23.91), 400m free (4:58.51), 800m free (10:20.51), 1,500m free (18:58.51).

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- Winners will be given 60 days to claim their prize upon receipt of notification. Prizes not claimed within 60 days will be forfeited in favor of Duty Free Philippines with prior DTI approval.
- Employees of Duty Free Philippines, Globe Telecom, their suppliers and PR agencies, including relatives up to second degree of consanguinity are disqualified from joining the raffle promo.

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Labor official, POEA lawyers in graft case

Trader claims suspects asked for P400,000 in exchange for a license

SANTA'S HELPER
LPG-SIZE Santa Claus figures get a final look over before they are sold to Christmas shoppers on this sidewalk stall in Avellano, Intramuros in Manila. RICHARD VISCONDE

By Maygan C. Ortiz

A TOP OFFICIAL OF THE National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) and two lawyers of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) face graft charges for allegedly demanding money from a businessman.

National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) director Nestor Mantaring identified the suspects as NLRC Commissioner Victoriano Calaycay, 58, of Sampaloc, Manila, and POEA lawyers Zenaida Ordanillo of Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City and Augustus Reinaldo of Cebu, Quezon City.

Also charged was businessman Jimmy Gubbucia, of Sampaloc, Manila, who was arrested during an entrapment operation conducted last Dec. 1, according to NBI Special Action Unit (SAU) chief Clemente Guzman III.

"The suspects were face charges for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act in the Office of the Ombudsman," Jo Guzman added.

The investigation report submitted by Dir. Guzman's unit showed that businessman Jaculyn Enriquez had accused the suspects of demanding P400,000 from her in exchange for processing a license that would allow her to operate a recruitment agency in the country.

Enriquez told NBI investigators that the suspects had allegedly asked her for a downpayment of P200,000.

On Dec. 1, the complainant informed the NBI that Kidulpo told her to meet them in a Manila hotel for the payoff. NBI SAU operatives arrested the four men after Enriquez gave them P200,000 in marked bills, Jo Guzman said.

Calaycay and the three other suspects were brought to the NBI where they were detained over the weekend after inquest proceedings at the Manila City Prosecutor's Office on Saturday.

The NBI official added that the four men would also be subjected to preliminary investigation for alleged direct bribery charges.

Calaycay, Ordanillo, Hidalgo and Gubbucia were released on P60,000 bail each after posting bail of P180,000 each for their provisional liberty.

Makati school awaits safety certification before it reopens

By Tarra V. Quismundo

STUDENTS OF SAN ISIDRO National High School in Makati City will remain on holiday until the end of the week as experts have yet to ascertain if the school is already safe for classes to resume.

In a statement, Mayor Jejomar Binay yesterday said experts would conduct yet another test in and around the campus this week to measure chemical levels on the area. The school would only be reopened when it is declared safe of toxic chemicals, he added.

Different chemicals spilled inside the school laboratory on Nov. 28 when a cabinet containing the substances there was mounted on a wall suddenly collapsed.

Although emergency workers had already cleared the laboratory of the spilled chemicals and of her debris, the school has remained closed.

"Until we receive a certification from the Makati task force that the school is truly safe for the school children, other school personnel and the general public, we will coordinate with the organizers of classes," said Binay, referring to the team of toxicology experts and emergency workers sealed to decontaminate the four-story school.

Results of initial tests conducted on Nov. 29 by experts from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Labor department's Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) showed that "hazardous chemical compounds" in the school and its surroundings were beyond normal levels.

"To ensure like this, we defer to the recommendation of the experts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our constituents," Binay said. The school, located in the corner of P. Binay and Sinforosa Streets, has 1,200 students.

Manila judge sends woman recruiter to jail for life

By Tina G. Santos

A JUDGE SENTENCED A WOMAN TO LIFE in the imprisonment yesterday after he found her guilty of recruiting people for nonexistent jobs abroad.

Judge Ofelia Pangilinan of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 28 also ordered Elizabeth Bejar to serve 40 more years in jail for swindle.

In addition, Bejar was ordered to pay a fine of P500,000 each to return the money she took from her victims.

Hunt on

Pangilinan earlier ordered the issuance of an arrest warrant for Bejar, convicted, Benito Bodoque, who had gone into hiding.

Bejar was arrested by policemen in 2000 following complaints from several job seekers who accused her of luring them into paying thousands of pesos to land jobs in New Zealand.

But even after paying the placement fees, the victims said they did not bring home any of the targeted promises.

No authority

Based on a certification issued by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, it was found out that Bejar was not licensed or authorized to recruit workers for overseas employment.

In her defense, Bejar denied the accusations against her, saying she was also working for the judge.

However, the court gave credence to the victims' "straightforward, credible and convincing testimonies," saying they showed no ill motive in testifying against the accused.

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Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, **Prefecture Regional Office III - Manila** (PHIC[illegible]) invites contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Procurement of IT Hardware under Shopping Public Bidding with [illegible] and Eligibility Documents Envelope under Attached Project Specifications.

The Government of the Philippines through PHILHEALTH has committed funds for which this invitation is issued. The Approved Budget for this contract (ABC) of this following is as follows:

LOT	IT EQUIPMENTS	QUANTITY (Units)	UNIT PRICE (Pesos)	ABC (Pesos)
Lot 1	Desktop Computers with UPS	10	[illegible]	[illegible]
Lot 2	Network Printer (Laserjet)	5	[illegible]	[illegible]

Bid documents together are available to the **Pre-Bid Conference** at the Prefecture Regional Office III Conference Room, Ground Floor, Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, Manila Doctors Village, Davao City on **December 13, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.**

Bids shall be received at the Prefecture Regional Office III, Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, Manila Doctors Village, Davao City on **January 15, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.** Bids received after the cut-off time will be returned unopened. Bidders are invited to be present during the opening of bids.

LOT	IT EQUIPMENTS	PDS (Pesos)
Lot 1	Desktop Computers with UPS	[illegible]
Lot 2	Network Printer (Laserjet)	[illegible]

The bidding shall be conducted following the **Two-Bid Envelope** procedure, open bidding, and post-qualification procedures as prescribed in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Bidders are required to submit their bids in two (2) separate sealed envelopes, labeled accordingly as follows:

LOT 1 - PROCUREMENT OF [illegible] COMPUTERS (10 PC UPS)

Terms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft, or irrevocable letter of credit	[illegible]	PHP [illegible]
Surety bond	[illegible]	PHP [illegible]

LOT 2 - PROCUREMENT OF [illegible] NETWORK PRINTERS (LASERJET)

Terms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft, or irrevocable letter of credit	[illegible]	PHP [illegible]
Surety bond	[illegible]	PHP [illegible]

Philhealth Regional Office III Bids and Awards Committee (PRO III BAC) reserves the right to waive any formality in the requirements in the eligibility requirements and in the conditions. PRO III BAC further reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

For more information, please call the BAC Secretariat at telephone nos. (082) [illegible] (082) [illegible] or fax no. (082) [illegible].

Bid documents are available for purchase at the amount of [illegible].

(Sgd.) **RAUL M. DRAGASTER**
Chairperson, PRO III Bids and Awards Committee

MetroBriefs

Fire hits Malay house

Fifty bombers and two engine units from Quezon City rushed to the burning of a two-storey residential house in Barangay Malay, Boracay, a province's tourist capital, Wednesday morning.

The fire, which started at around 10:30 a.m., razed the house owned by Ramon Bautista, a resident of Barangay Malay.

Bautista and his family were not at home when the fire broke out.

Investigators said the fire started from a faulty electrical wiring in the kitchen.

Damage to the house was estimated at P1 million.

Thieves strike thrice

A GASOLINE station, a restaurant and a commercial building in Quezon City were victimized by thieves in separate incidents Monday, police said.

Police said a robber broke into the Petron gasoline station on Commonwealth Avenue, Fairview, at around 3:30 a.m. and took away P6,000 in cash.

Another robber broke into the Chowking restaurant on Commonwealth Avenue, Fairview, at around 4:30 a.m. and took away P10,000 in cash.

Police said a robber broke into the Jollibee restaurant on Commonwealth Avenue, Fairview, at around 5:30 a.m. and took away P10,000 in cash.

Job fair on Dec. 8

A 2,000 jobs will be held by Manila International Container Terminal Services Inc. (MICT) on Dec. 8 at the Ninoy Aquino International Terminal Complex in Parañaque City.

The job fair will be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have at least a high school diploma, and be physically fit.

Interested applicants may submit their resumes at the MICT Office, Gate 3, Port Area, Manila.

For more information, call 527-4678 local 2000.

Villamor HS reunion

The batch 1976 graduates of Villamor High School will hold a reunion on Dec. 16 at the recently renovated hall of the Villamor Air Base Officers' Club in Pasay City.

Those who graduated from the school in 1976 are invited to attend the reunion.

For more information, call Ms. Ruby Tumacder at 0917-5[illegible] or Ms. Lorna Mendoza at 0917-5[illegible].

12-hour fire destroys warehouse in Pasig City

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOR MORE THAN TWELVE HOURS early yesterday morning, firemen were battling a raging blaze at a big tire fire broke out inside a warehouse full of rolls of cotton in Pasig City.

The fire had already razed more than P40 million worth of raw materials as firemen tirelessly worked to put the fire under control until the afternoon, FO3 Salvador Berbeste told the Inquirer.

He said the fire was reported by a watchman at the compound who saw thick smoke coming out of the warehouse on Among Rodrigues Avenue in Barangay Rosario at 2:15 a.m.

The watchman, owned by textile company Libra Mills, had stopped operating two weeks ago allegedly because of financial problems, Insp. Fire chief Rolando Berdugon told the firemen.

Responding firefighters had to fill fresh water considering the fire which quickly spread to the rolls of cotton kept inside the warehouse.

The firemen worked hard to contain the fire to prevent it from spreading to an adjacent warehouse full of sewing machines and other equipment used to make chrome parts.

The burning warehouse was separated from the second building by a concrete concrete wall, but firefighters were concerned that the flames would reach the wooden ceiling of the adjacent warehouse, Berbeste said.

At noon yesterday the fire had already razed the burning warehouse to the ground, but the rolls of cotton inside were still burning.

Berdugon said it would probably take them until this morning to completely douse out the fire.

Twelve fire trucks of the Pasig City Fire Station had been deployed to the compound, taking turns in refilling their water tanks as the operation dragged on.

They were backed up by more than 10 volunteer fire trucks, Berdugon added.

Herbs, drugs inducing abortion banned in Quiapo

By Tina G. Santos

THE MANILA CITY HALL has ordered a citywide crackdown against the sale of drugs and herbs used to induce abortion.

Mayor Lito Atienza also banned the sale of herbs in Quiapo after agents of the National Bureau of Investigation last arrested sidewalk vendors in the area who were allegedly selling Cytotec pills. The drug, which has been banned by the Bureau of Food and Drugs, is usually taken to treat ulcer. But it can also cause miscarriages in pregnant women.

Atienza, chair of Pro-Life Philippines, said he had earlier forged an agreement with vendors in Quiapo that they would not sell herbs or drugs that could lead to an abortion.

He had also ordered them to gather their carts to make sure the agreement would be strictly implemented.

However, operatives of the MH Field Operations Division apprehended six herbal product allegedly selling Cytotec pills during an operation in Quiapo last Wednesday.

The suspects were identified as Rosenda Lubbo, Tonie Agan, Rosalie Angeles, Orlando Mellizo, Gina Archive and Emiliano Tolentino. Seized from them were 79 pills worth P7,000, according to the NBI, the suspects were selling the pills for P60 to P100 each.

NBI Field Operations Division chief Roland Argentino, whose unit had spearheaded the operation, said earlier that the suspects would be charged with violating Republic Act 7729 or the Food, Drugs and Cosmetics Act as amended by Executive Order No. 175. The offense carries a jail term ranging from one to five years and a fine of P1,000 to P10,000.

"We have received information that a single supplier could dispose of at least 50 boxes of Cytotec per day," Argentino said, adding that each box contained 36 tablets.

The NBI official said that the vendor customers, mostly students with ages ranging from 17 to 20, would usually buy a set of six pills at a time to induce an abortion.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday, December 6, 2006

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

STILL REIGNING AT 79. Thai Buddhist monks walk past a giant portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej during ceremonies Tuesday, Dec. 5, in Bangkok, Thailand. King Bhumibol, the world's longest reigning monarch, is celebrating his 79th birthday. AP

World powers set meet on Iran nuclear sanctions

PARIS—SIX WORLD POWERS MEET in Paris on Tuesday to try to agree what sanctions to impose on Iran, the United Nations said, as Iranian nuclear activities feared to be part of a drive to build the bomb.

High-ranking diplomats from the five veto-wielding UN Security Council members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—plus Germany will gather at the Quai d'Orsay meeting at the French foreign ministry.

A representative of European Union policy chief Javier Solana will also participate in the meeting.

World powers have been trying for weeks to agree on a package of measures to impose on Iran for ignoring a UN deadline to stop enriching uranium, which can be used to generate power or to build an atomic bomb.

While all agree on the principle of sanctions, they disagree on what form these should take, with Russia and to a lesser extent China, which have extensive economic and energy ties with Iran, seeking to limit their scope.

France's Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said on Monday the talks—which follow several failed attempts to secure a deal on sanctions against Iran—had a strong chance of succeeding.

"I think that an outcome is underway now on this text," he said in Brussels, after talks with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki.

A draft resolution circulated by Britain, France and Germany would have barred trade with Iran in goods related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and slapped financial and travel restrictions on persons and agencies involved in either area.

Russia and China have tried to water down the text, saying the sanctions should not target individuals and should be limited in duration, while Washington seems to back it up.

The United States, and to some extent France, have shown signs of impatience with the reluctance of China and Russia to put the package of sanctions to the vote in the Security Council.

On Thursday, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Washington may seek to impose a vote in spite of objections from Russia.

A top Russian official was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti news agency Tuesday that Security Council members were moving closer to an accord over the draft resolution, but added that talks were still tough going. AFP

Poisoning death probe continues

LONDON—BRITISH DETECTIVES were in Moscow on Tuesday to continue their investigation into the mysterious poisoning death of former spy Alexander Litvinenko, as diplomatic tensions between Britain and Russia rose closer to the surface.

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police confirmed that "a team of officers" had arrived in Moscow, but could not say how many had made the trip, or how long the groundwork may.

While British media have reported that nine detectives went to Moscow, Russian state television RIA-Novosti said that only four arrived, and were met by British embassy officials before leaving in a minibus.

According to The Guardian daily, the officers went to interview the three Russian men who met Litvinenko on Nov. 1, the day he fell ill, about three weeks before he eventually died. They will also interview any other persons they deem can cooperate publicly, the newspaper said.

The two businessmen, Andrei Lugovoi, Dmitri Kovtun and Vyacheslav Sokolenko—have all insisted that they are innocent, and Lugovoi has said that he believes they are being framed. In comments made to The Times, he said he and his two associates were ready to meet with investigators. AFP

Nasa unveils plans to build moon base

WASHINGTON—NASA Administrator plans on Monday for a permanent base on the moon, to be started were after an astronaut return there around 2020.

The agency's deputy administrator Shana Dale said the United States would develop rockets and spacecraft to get people to the moon and establish a rudimentary base. There, other countries and commercial interests could expand the outpost to develop scientific and other interests, she said.

Dale and other Nasa officials said the agency envisioned a base as one of the lunar poles, to take advantage of the near-constant sunlight for solar-power generation, and going it an "open architecture" design to attract others can use and the capabilities they want.

Scott Horowitz, Nasa's associate administrator for exploration, said crews of four astronauts would make working missions to the moon starting around 2020. At most equipment was set up, human stays would eventually grow to 180 days, and become permanent by 2024. By 2037, officials said, a permanent outpost serving robots on the surface would take people on expeditions far from the base.

Nasa gave no cost estimate for the program and no design details for a possible moon base. Dale said all plans assumed that the agency would continue operating from a fixed budget of about $17 billion a year.

The space shuttle fleet is to be retired by 2010, and the United States plans to send back its crew to the International Space Station. The station is still under construction, with a mission by the shuttle Discovery to lift off this week. Dale said assets would be shifted from the shuttle and the station to the lunar exploration program.

While the Bush administration and Nasa have spoken in general terms about plans for a return to the moon, followed by human spaceflight to Mars, this is the first time officials have proposed a permanent lunar base.

"We're going for a lease on the moon," Horowitz said. "It's a very exciting destination."

In a televised news conference from the Johnson Space Center in Houston on the eve of an international conference there on space exploration, Dale said the plan was developed after consultation with space agencies representing 14 countries and more than 1,000 experts in space science and aerospace. NYT

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WORLDBRIEFS

Indon salon resigns

JAKARTA—An Indonesian lawmaker has resigned from his party over a sex video showing him cavorting with a singer and now faces a criminal investigation over allegations he bribed her to leave an audition, officials said Tuesday. Yahya Zaini was head of Golkar's anti-bat affairs committee before the scandal forced him to resign his post in September. Golkar party. He was also been reported from parliament over the sex scandal, which has gripped the conservative nation. "He has resigned yesterday (Monday) and he confirmed to now processing his position in the house," Soni Sebastian, head of the Golkar faction in parliament told AFP. The singer, pictured online was apparently shot with a mobile phone in an upmarket hotel. AFP

Pinochet stable

SANTIAGO—Former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, accused of torture, killings and kidnappings during his 1973-1990 rule, was also on his feet and recovery at on Monday following a heart attack over the weekend, doctors said. His daughter said it was "almost a miracle" her 91-year-old father had survived and thanked supporters who have held a vigil outside the military hospital in Santiago where he is being treated. Pinochet, the best known of the strongmen who dominated South American politics in the 1970s and 1980s, was rushed to hospital on Sunday for an angioplasty to unblock his arteries. Doctors said on Monday it was too risky to operate further. Reuters

Helicopter mishap

BAGHDAD—Four American service members were killed when a Blackhawk helicopter suffered mechanical failure while flying over a lake in Anbar Province in western Iraq and made an emergency landing on the shore, American military officials said Monday. The military said the Blackhawk (tail number 89-26 from Knight Company) helicopter, with 10 people aboard, was flying over Lake Qadisiya, near Habbiba, on Sunday when it began to experience "mechanical difficulties." The pilots steered the helicopter toward the lake's shore, and it made a hard landing and ground roll in the water's edge, according to 1Lt. Col. Jonathon J. Aberle, a military spokesperson in Iraq. The mechanical failure, which could have been caused by an enemy attack, officials said. New York Times News Service

The WORLD

Line Lorenne S. Cinco

Military topples Fiji gov't, ousts PM

SUVA—FIJI'S MILITARY HAS TOPPLED THE government and dismissed elected Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, commander Voreqe Bainimarama announced Tuesday following a months-long standoff between the two men.

"As of six o'clock this evening, the military has taken over the government, has executive authority and the running of this country," he told a press conference.

"I request you to remain calm and support the [military] in this process of political readjustment to pave the way for a new NIC," Bainimarama said at the long-feared coup finally became official.

Saying he was acting with "great reluctance," the commander said he was suspending certain provisions of the constitution, taking on the role of the president and appointing an interim premier and government.

Having stepped into the shoes of the president, I shall now therefore dismiss the prime minister," he added.

Bainimarama named a dozen with no military background, Jona Senilagakali Senilagakali, as caretaker prime minister and said that parliament would be dissolved.

Senilagakali was paraded before a throng of journalists following the press conference but did not take any questions.

The military commander, who had been ordered by regional powers Australia and New Zealand as well as the United Nations of representatives if he were ahead with a coup, vowed the takeover would not be permanent.

He urged the world not to act hastily, even as New Zealand and Australia said they would dig sanctions on the new regime and as the United Nations warned that Fijian troops could be pulled from overseas peacekeeping missions.

"I plead to the international community to first learn and understand the situation here in Fiji before you take any action," he said.

Bainimarama had repeatedly challenged Qarase to resign or face a coup, and said he took the action after the premier failed to show up at a meeting with the country's president Tuesday.

President Ratu Josefa Iloilo had earlier Tuesday asked Qarase to resign or agree to Bainimarama's demands. The prime minister's refusal had left Fiji in "limbo," the army chief said.

"This stalemate has forced me to step forward and the military has taken over power," he said.

Despite his action, Bainimarama said the constitution would largely remain in place, and that the judiciary and other arms of government would continue to operate.

He called on Fijians to remain calm and maintain their vocation. AFP

FIJIAN soldiers take up positions outside Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase's residence on the nation's capital Suva Dec. 5. AFP

3 car bombs, gunmen kill 30 people in Iraq

BAGHDAD—GUNMEN AND bombers killed 30 people in Baghdad on Tuesday, including 14 Shiite religious workers when a powerful Iraqi Shiite leader urged President George Bush to strike harder at Iranian rebels in every shape.

Gunmen killed the 14 employees of a Shiite religious foundation in the capital, while officials said three car bombs killed 16 people and wounded 25 in a separate attack near a fuel station in a predominantly Shiite area in southern Baghdad.

The Shiites' employees for the Shiite Endowment, a foundation that oversees religious sites and mosques, were killed when their bus was ambushed, Salah Abdul Razzaq, a spokesperson for the organization told Reuters.

Razzaq said 16 employees were killed and eight wounded when gunmen forced the bus to stop on a highway in Qalat Sukhayr.

Another Ministry employee said gunmen first set off a car bomb and then sprayed the bus with bullets. The sources put the toll at 15 employees dead and seven wounded.

The attack came a day after Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, a Shiite and head of the biggest party in Iraq's government, SCIRI, met Bush in Washington as Iraqi and US officials struggle to contain violence pitching the country toward all-out civil war. Reuters

Controversial US envoy to the UN resigns

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT Bush reluctantly accepted the resignation of the UN ambassador, John R. Bolton, on Monday, conceding that the envoy could not win Senate confirmation and signaling that the administration is unwilling to make another real race around congressional opposition in order to keep Bolton in his job.

Ending more than a year of controversy surrounding the blunt-spoken ambassador, Bush issued a strongly worded statement excoriating Bolton's opponents on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for refusing to send his nomination to the Senate floor for a vote.

"They chose to obstruct his confirmation, even though he enjoys majority support in the Senate, and even though their tactics will

BOLTON AP

disrupt our diplomatic work at a sensitive and important time," Bush said. "This stubborn obstruction ill serves our country and discourages men and women of talent from serving their nation."

Bush went on to praise Bolton, a fiery conservative and longtime critic of the United Nations, thanking him for his "advocacy of human rights and human dignity."

Despite the president's strong words, administration officials had largely given up on Bolton's confirmation last month, after Sen. Lincoln Chafee, R-R.I., and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said he would not support it.

It was not immediately clear who would replace Bolton. The leading candidate appeared to be the lanetrum ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, who has told colleagues he is ready to leave Baghdad. Others said to be in the running are Richard L. Williamson, former ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Sen. Mike DeWine, the Ohio Republican who has his re-election bid, and R. Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary of state for political affairs.

Bolton's decision to step down brings to an end the stormy and controversial tenure of an ambassador whose confrontational style often conflicted with the understated ways of the United Nations.

To his critics, he was an elusive proponent of a hard-line, conservative ideology at odds with the multilateral approach at the United Nations. But his supporters pointed to numerous successful security Council resolutions, including measures aiming to close or halt the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea and another ending the war in Lebanon and establishing a UN peacekeeping force there. New York Times News Service

WHAT'S INSIDE
■ Diving drive plunges as Perez gets injured/A30

SPORTS
Editor Toddyrie S. Malcedone

RP pugs' perfect start gives glimmer of hope

By Ted S. Malcedone, Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—FOR EIGHT tense seconds on Sunday night, the Philippines' enviable record of six straight match wins in the boxing ring looked to have ended there.

Lightweight Gilbert Ramales stunned, thumped his chest with both gloves, then raised his head gear, refusing to look at his opponent.

He had just absorbed a thundering left hook to the right side of the face from the bruised Mohamad Al Hamdan in the 2002 Busan Asian Games light welterweight silver medalist.

As the Malaysian referee gave the 22-year-old Saudi a right count, RP coach Fortito Ganzo yelled instructions: "Ramales ma agad, 'wag ma kayuan makuan (Get back at him, don't let him get away with it)."

After recovering at mastery in the first two rounds, 14-10, Ramales lost the third, 6-5, but he regained form in the one-minute interval after the third and charged up with a volley of punches in the final round.

Ramales capped three straight points late in the fight with a left hook that landed up the chin for his most important blow, 20-17, and then used the clock to preserve a slim 20-19 victory at the 15th Asian Games here.

"That was close," Ramales said in Filipino after the fight. "[Hindi] ma pasol and tough and I had to step up in the fourth round. I felt bored my coach's instructions, that's why I got the points."

Ramales' victory set up another Filipino-Saudi showdown for him in the quarterfinals, hoping for a second victory that will secure him of at least the bronze medal.

In all, five Filipinos stood a win away from a sure medal with light flyweight Godfrey Cutro and featherweight Joan Tipon also pulling off handsome victories on their debut Sunday night.

Because there were a lot more entries in their classes, if both lightweight Violito Payla and featherweight Jaeroxy Mayor won each will win to reach the quarterfinals, scheduled Thursday at the Aspire Hall 5 here. Ramales, Cutro and Tipon fight for a medal Friday.

Cutro, the last minute replacement for the suspended Harry Tanamor, won by a controversial stoppage over Malaysia's Zulkifli Adli 12 seconds in the third round while Tipon took all the rounds en route to a 20-10 decision of Chinese Taipei's Liao Chi-Jung.

"The pressure was on because on the conditioning that I've just a substitute," said Cutro. "I was frustrated that I wasn't part of the original team. But I guess this is my break. I'm focused on getting the gold."

ANTHONY Marcial A win away from medal. STORY

2006 ASIAN GAMES MEDAL TALLY

Nation	G	S	B	Total	Nation	G	S	B	Total
China	79	55	31	165	South Korea	24	17	26	67
Japan	31	28	36	95	Iran	18	16	17	51
Kazakhstan	26	14	17	57	Uzbekistan	13	5	11	29
Chinese Taipei	11	6	13	30	Thailand	9	8	14	31
Malaysia	8	5	9	22	Kuwait	8	4	3	15
Indonesia	5	6	10	21	Qatar	5	4	3	12
Hong Kong	4	5	15	24	Singapore	3	6	9	18
India	3	4	9	16	Turkmenistan	3	1	4	8
Philippines	3	3	6	12	Kyrgyzstan	2	4	5	11
Saudi Arabia	2	5	7	14	Bahrain	2	1	1	4
Vietnam	2	3	5	10	Afghanistan	1	1	0	2
Myanmar	2	2	3	7	Nepal	1	0	0	1
Mongolia	2	1	2	5	Pakistan	0	2	2	4
North Korea	2	1	1	4	Oman	0	1	0	1

DOHA 2006

RP Sked Dec. 6

Badminton (Aspire) 9 a.m. — Alamsyah Yunrick/Annisa Saroinsong (Indonesia) vs Ann Kim Brid/Gaby Rose Lay (Philippines)

Baseball (Al Ryan) 6 p.m.—RP vs Thailand

Chess (Al Ryan Indoor Hall) 3 p.m.—Round 1 team event (Ronald Dublas, Jayson Layla, Jedrix Bonesa)

Boxing (Aspire) 2 p.m.—Yerwin Ancajas vs Angkhan Dromphayphuang (Thailand)

Rowing (West Bay lagoon)Men's double sculls

Shooting (Lusail shooting range) 9 a.m.—Men's 25-meter rapid fire pistol (Rafaelito "Tac" Garcia)

Swimming (Khalifa Aquatic Centre) 10 a.m.—(heats); 6 p.m. (finals)Women's 100-meter freestyle (Erica Tetteo); Men's 100-meter freestyle (Kendrick Ng-Wonders); 200-meter breaststroke (Jennylei Ozamiz); Men's 200-meter individual medley (Miguel Molina)Women's 200-meter freestyle (Marlene Sandoval)

Tennis (Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex)

Weightlifting (Al Dana Sports Hall) 4 p.m.—Men's 105 kg (Rolando Browne)

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BIDOY Rivera: Their best wasn't enough. CHRIS CO

A medal that got away from Pinoys

By Ted S. Philemdres

DOHA, QATAR—IT WAS A MEDAL THAT got away.

Philippine team officials could not believe their eyes when the scores after the first block of the men's doubles in tenpin bowling were updated on computer screens at the Ufuk Asian Games here Monday night.

Marlowe Tee and Tyrone Ong-pauco, originally in third spot behind the two leading pairs from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar with 2742 pinfalls, vaulted into the lead after Ongpauco's second-game score of 189 was revised to 289.

Filipino coaches then rushed to the Qatar Bowling Center venue and delegation officials burned the lines to know if somehow, the president of the Philippine Bowling Congress, who was watching the competitions.

The Philippines' first medal of the Games was within reach. Or so it seemed.

Athletes Village

Meanwhile, Tee and Ongpauco headed back to the Athletes Village unaware of the commotion at the venue. So there's how fabulous Tee's 1-fifth strong man, bowls keglers knows their 2742 total was settled in a tiebreak of scores.

The third-segment of the men's steward block were still go rolling it out on the lanes.

Then, 15 minutes later, the joy and suspense many were gone. Scores were revised again and Ongpauco got the same second game 189...bust like that.

"There was no explanation given and we didn't ask," frustrations said of the score sheet done. "In any case, our scores tallied with the original 189."

Tee and Ongpauco eventually winded up fifth, 79 pins behind a Saudi tandem brothers' tandem who came from nowhere to pip the UAE and Qatar pairs. A That' means hauled fourth.

It's non-any consolations, Tee's six-game output in the doubles—which poled only to Thai

team of Sakchai Jayanam and Nopadol Gatongthitak's 1493—exulted him from 36th to seventh in the all-events.

Later in the night, Marianne Daisy Paredes and Lisa Clemens scored 2366 pinfalls and wound up sixth, the best finish among the three AP pairs, in the ladies doubles won by Michelle Kwang Yen Mei and Valerie Yeo Shuying Yeo (2671).

South Korea's Choi Aeja and Kim Yeon-Ju took the silver with 2626, with the Japanese duo of Mika Nakano and Kazuko Mizuno shooting the bronze with 2516.

Lisa del Rosario and Jojo Cazarez paired for 10th place (2527) and Jessie Garcia Ramirez and Cecilia Yap finished in 24th place in the 37-tandem field with 2274.

World champions

The highly touted Filipinos have failed to land a medal in all four events disputed so far in the sport. They go up against runners-ups, ring with reigning and former world champions again today in the men's and women's trios.

Yet, the Manila Southeast Asian Games reunion gold medalist has a first dance in the Asiad, added as six-popping six-game series of 1466—the best so far in the competitions—to Ongpauco's 1447 in (541) total in the 58-game session's top behind pairs from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar which tied for the gold.

And as the highly touted RP bowlers managed to regain their bowl after a lackluster performance in the singles on Saturday, the hosts made it an unbeatable four-of-four with the sterling debuts of light flyweight Godfrey Gaoiran and heavyweight icon Tipon.

Tee opened with a 205 before averaging up games of 256-247-193 and 224. The 22-year-old businessman from San Juan clinched the silver for his pair with a fabulous 289 in the sixth game—the second best 2167.

Ongpauco dipped below 200 for one—189 is the second game...but finished strongly with a 256. He rolled other games of 204, 254, 202 and 201.

Asuncion siblings take on Malaysian tandem

By Ted S. Philemdres

DOHA, QATAR—RICHENTON SIBlings Rosenvelt and Rexonie Asuncion try to substitute their world ranking today when they take on a dangerous Malaysian pair in the mixed doubles play in the 15th Asian Games here.

The Asuncions, ranked 22nd in the world and the only Filipino shuttlers in the competition, set out as the underdogs against Sim Kien Hoot and Quay Swee Ling, both part of the team that recently reached the Thomas and Uber Cup semifinals in Japan this year.

Sim and Quay, however, have not gained as a team before the Asiad and are expected to be kept guessing by the attacking moves of their opponents' mates. The Malaysians are also rusted in the tough singles battles.

Rex is the other half of the men's tandem that finished third in the 2006 World Championships while Quay reached the finals of this year's New Zealand Open in women's doubles.

Weightlifting

Rexonie Reynes opens his bid in the men's 105-kilogram class of weightlifting at the Khalifa sports complex, monitored by the opportunity to break the current Southeast Asia competition record set in Manila by Chinese and Iranian lifters.

Powerful national weightlifting champion Nathaniel "Net" Padilla will be the earliest bird among the Filipinos at the competition venues as he competes in the men's super-fine pistol event at 8 a.m. at the Lusail Shooting Range.

Padilla, the seven-time Asiad campaigner whose best finish in the event was fourth in the 1990 Beijing Asiad, is expected to advance to the medal phase of the event, according to Philippine Shooting Association head honcho Micaspeak.

Also out of the medals in a tournament that featured 17 grandmasters is the men's frigid frame, GM-candidate Ronald Dalmo and International Master Darwin Layda team up with 14-year-old Anders Boonzo in the first round of the team event at the Al Diana Indoor Hall.

Layda settled for a nine-way tie for ninth place with 5.5 points, 1.5 behind gold medalist Murtas Kazhgaleyev of Kazakhstan, in the nine-round competition. He lost only once—to Erdeli Sibi Batmunkh in the eight round—but took the scalp of Gibb Talib Moosa Ibrahim of United Arab Emirates and Abdur Rab Ibn Sattar Bangladesh and drew with four other GMs.

Dalmo was among the three 5-point-ers in men's play while Boonzo, the prized 3rd from tiebreaks, Rebol, wound up with 4.5 points before seven others to finish in 26th-31st pile-jigged GM Hamprt Kimeva.

The hosting squad sends another fighter into the ring as welterweight Francis Joseph Jauhiainen with Singkhon Chaophuthuang of Laos at the Jiu Jitsu Boxing Hall. The Filipinos have recorded six straight sweeps in five elimination going into last night's fights. All five have scored "pins" round a win sweep of clinching at least a bronze medal.

Double seals

American Angie Yi-Jenkins and Jose Rodriguez return as a pair to the Wed Ivy Lagoon arena to fight for a berth in the finals of the men's double seals. The Filipinos will go up against home team Agnes Chrisme Taqui and Hong Kong.

Miguel Molina leads five Filipinos vying to the hosts of the events in the pool of the Hamad Aquatic Center starting at 10 a.m.

Erica Sotto plunges into action in the 100-meter freestyle, Rendrick Ey in the men's race, Jennifer Cordero in the women's 200m butterfly, Molina in the 200m individual medley and Mariclo Candemor in the 800m freestyle.

Molina, the brightest Filipino hope for a medal in the tough competitions that have been dominated by world powers China and Japan, sprints for fourth place—the best Filipino finish in the pool so far—in the 400m IM on Saturday.

"I'll do my best again, that's all I can promise," said Molina, one of the three **men homebaked Filipinos in last year's** Southeast Asian Games in Manila with three gold medals.

The other triple gold medalist **was** Taiwanese and three Manila Bay divers, who make **her debut** on Dec. 10 in the 10m springboard event.

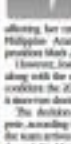
KEMMENIC and Rexonie Asuncion: Family affair

Diving drive plunges as Perez gets injured

By Mary Anthony Reyes

THE COUNTRY'S ASIAN GAMES HOPES in diving just took a plunge.

Then after squarius officials yesterday confirmed reports of injury to top diver Nicko Perez, **two days before** she and the diving team



fly to Doha for the competitions.

Perez, the 2005 Southeast Asian Games triple gold winner, is suffering from **wear tissue** to her mid-back "that is affecting her range of motion," according to Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph.

However, Joseph, who went ahead to Doha along with the national swimmers, remained confident the 20-year-old Perez can still make it since **the doctors** will be resuming **on her.**

The decision whether Perez would compete, according to Joseph, will be made when the team arrives in Qatar, where Dr. Alex Pineda and Dr. Martin Gamara will look on her condition.

Joseph said the doctors will apply the Doctor Technique, which is a form of soft tissue mobilization designed to break down the scar tissue as well as stretch connective tissue fibers.

SHELLA Mae Perez: Doubtful campaigner

The procedure, added Joseph, will take 2-3 days because bone or nerve damage has been ruled out.

Perez sustained the injury while competing in China a few months ago although she continued training in Laguna after that.

Her stint in Doha is highly counted upon as **home** the country's lagging campaign in Qatar.

"I am sure Nicko is determined to dive for the country once more," added Joseph. "The girl is very dedicated and disciplined."

Tennis field toughest ever

By Ted S. Philemdres

DOHA, QATAR—WITH FORMER WORLD No. 9 Paradorn Srichaphan, top Asian player Lee Hyung-taik and the multiple Middle-East doubles champions Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupati on the roster of entries, the Doha Asian Games tennis competition is probably the toughest in Asiad history.

Twenty ranch bordering the world-ranked players is highly anticipated," said tennis Mohamed Al-Sahdi, a Kuwaiti TV reporter who went to see his countrymen Nasser Al-Mulla-jasem, 7-2, in the qualifying round of the men's team event on Monday at the Khalifa Tennis and Squash Complex here.

"The Philippines has ranking players like [Cecil] Mamiit and [Eric] Taino but they are not as competitive as Paradorn, Lee and the Indians at the moment," added Al-Sahdi, a jeweler bank in Kuwait City "But they have a chance if Mamiit plays well."

Mamiit dropped his match against Malaysian Chanbasah, 6-7 (7), 6-1, 6-0, before Efren Hi-Amerkan Taino sealed the first point for the RP squad with a 6-3, 7-6 (6), 2-6 win over Abdullah Magbit.

Mamiit paired with Taino, in lieu of Beeth John Tiero, to close the door to Dhanesh and Magbit in the doubles, 6-2, 6-2, in 51 minutes.

"I was up and down today, but it was mostly bad," said Taino after his 1-hour 30 minute match. "That match was the toughest because it was my first, but I hope to play better next time."

The win earned for the Filipinos a tough quarterfinal encounter with No. 2 seed Chinese Taipei, which stunned the Indians, 2-1, with the victory of Hung Yu-hsiou and Lu Yen-hsun over the Paes-Bhupati pair in the deciding doubles. Magbit was inconsolable after the RP's win.

"I'm disappointed because I was so close to winning. I qualified [for the] Asiad. My last match is difficult for my coach to win the 3-1m I did not take my chances."

The top-seeded Thailand routed Brunei, who's manning a bad wrist, but still beat Sri Lanka, 3-1, on victories by world-ranked Danai Udomchoke and his doubles pairing with Sonchat Ratiwatana.

FREDERICK Taino returns a shot to Abdullah Magbit of Kuwait.

Ramirez still upbeat on RP

By Jun Navarro

CHEF DE MISSION WILLIAM "BUTCH" Ramirez remains upbeat over the chances of the Philippine delegation despite a modest haul comprising of just four golds since the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

The Philippine Sports Commission chair believes the RP contingent is still on track to meet its target of five gold medals regardless of the failures from judo, gymnastics, baseball, cycling, swimming, shooting, table tennis and weightlifting.

"There's still so much confidence in the air among our athletes and coaches despite those setbacks," said Ramirez in an overseas phone interview.

Coming out empty-handed, the 16-man judo team will fly out of the all-star Gulf nation today while athletes and officials from weightlifting, cycling and gymnastics are set to arrive home by Friday.

"It's quite understandable why we haven't won a medal yet. The level of competition is high," said Ramirez, who is nursing a runny nose due to the cold weather.

Guiao, Lim fined; Tigers meet Aces

By Marcus R. Castillo

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO - JUNE 15: Jason Kidd #5 of the New Jersey Nets goes up for a shot against Ben Wallace #32 of the Detroit Pistons during Game Two of the 2006 NBA Eastern Conference Finals at the Palacio de Deportes on June 15, 2006 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. NOTE TO USER: User expressly acknowledges and agrees that, by downloading and or using this photograph, User is consenting to the terms and conditions of the Getty Images License Agreement. Mandatory Credit: Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:30 p.m. — Welcome Ceremonies
5:00 p.m. — Star Hotshots vs. Air21

RED HILL COAST? PENG GUIAO and Dirk "B That Iconic Manager" Franklin Lim are facing fines of not less than P50,000 each and two-game suspensions for a mid-court altercation that took place Thursday night in a Philippine Cup road game in Tuguegarao.

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala is throwing the book at the two firebrand personalities for a thankful that never took place, while also set to levy fines amounting to close to P500,000 on players from both teams who left their benches.

The suspensions in particular could prove quite punishing, as the leagues have never before banned anyone that much and it has still be verbal abuse.

"There was no fight," Guiao told the inquirer on a cellphone interview late last night. "I never threw a punch, when I did was disengage my self from him (Lim) because his face was almost touching mine."Basic Commissioner's of Order/Indiscipline

Guiaoand he never threw a punch, but admitted that he "managed to the whole thing" by changing into Red Bull's part of the court "because I was pissed at me."

"Yes, I threw pivot 6-7 Sam Thinker and it started the whole thing," Lim said. "But what the PBA should find out is what drove me to do that. He cursed at my players and then at me and that pissed me off."

A statement from the PBA said that Eala will fine Guiao and Lim "no less than P50,000 each," and suspended for two games, with the Red Bull coach starting his with the Barako's 7:30 p.m. encounter with Welcome today.

"That is unfortunate because the game was as he still be," Guiao added. "He (Lim) caused the line and he has no business doing that."

Greenwater Meadows clings to Flight C lead

BACOLOD CITY — GREENWATER Meadows shot 99 points and Botanic Sanchez de Cadiz inside 77 to remain on top after two days of the 37th PG-Am Invitational tournament here.

Douglas Packer and brothers Leroy and Gary combined for 69 to go with Eddie Hernandez's 33 at the par 69 Canlaj Johns Run Golf Club course to cover Greenwater Meadows to the top in the Fil Us rimus Flight C lead with 169.

Davao Englewanners scored 86 and Capitol Hills Golf Club carded 90 to claim second and third places with 181 and 185, respectively. That 77 gave Botanic SG and the Sta Dridam Flight C lead. Paulo Ilan fired 86 and Capitol Hills earned 77 to remain within sight with 181 and 189, respectively.

The Packers again made a astronomical turnaround from John Lees in their pouch, they nailed down before synergizing to California. Mike Stadler Heal stayed at home and new plays for John Fay.

Ilanan's scores via the Stableford scoring system were Robert de Jesus with 35, Gil Galina 30, Jhon Lumbao 19 and Bernard Chang 36. Arnold Gonzaga was the Silkman with 33 and 66 for count.

For the second straight day teams in the lower divisions took center stage since the top guns in the flight C cannot tell only four today is the long morning overmastery.

Pilar Golf Passport will start its side defenses in the Fil and has divisions' championships against Del Monte Golf Club, Manila Southwoods, Alabang and newcomer Hamilton.

Tee Pulter tied an 88 to place fourth in the Fil division Flight C. City Mortgage of Hawaii is next with 82. Lei's uncle Sarah 93 made 76 to be in sixth spot with 161.

Noel Israel Flores came up with an 83 to take the new slot with 161, followed by PBA Comfort 83 159 and Metrocan 85 158.

Dandan, Barte lead RP charge

KYLE Joshua Dandan Gearing for second straight crown

By Mars Anthony Reyes

KYLE DANDAN FLASHED THE form that made him unbeatable last week, thumbing his fourteen foe to lead the country's two-pronged charge to the second round of the Pilipinas BTF junior tennis championships Week 2 yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The rising 6-foot Dandan, who matured this year under the International Tennis Academy in Florida, needed only 1 hour and 19 minutes to polish off Kevin Ng 6-2, 6-4 victory over qualifier Ian Boubin, whom he defeated in the quarterfinals en route to his fabled 1 title last Sunday.

"He has to spend, I like the way I am playing now and I hope I can maintain my level of game," said the 17-year-old Dandan, who advanced with compatriot Ralph Ryan Barte.

Barte, a former BF junior Davis Cupper who is conceded here, edged Japanese Hiroyasu, 6-3, 6-4, making it a double-edge assault from the local bets.

Dandan, ranked 177th in world juniors, will face fourth Rosarios of Ukraine, who handed out Hong Kong's Brno Ho Ioto, 6-1, 6-4.

Dandan said he is confident of repeating his title feat last week, feeling the highest ranked players here. He has also defeated Rosarios during their previous encounters.

Barte is pitted against second seed Kotoki Choi for Wat, who ousted Filipinos wild card Jose Lorenzo Ogsimorio, 6-2, 6-3.

Australia's Mathew Akins and Malaysia's Mohd Azhan Zainol also displayed impressive wins yesterday, defeating their respective opponents to get to the next round.

Akins, a quarterfinalist last week, shocked fifth-seeded Taiwanese Jui-Chen Hung, 6-3, 6-2. Jainal downed No. 8 Indonesian Leon Theodore, 6-4, 6-1, to make it.

Akins will take on Marvin Oliver of Cavite Bohols, who prevailed over Singaporean Sylvester Pee, 7-5, 7-5, as Jainal bob horns with Thailand's Sompon Supergal, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Taiwanese Jui-Ping Yu.

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After 29 qualifying races in 29 key cities, 125 finalists have emerged. Each one aiming to dethrone reigning Milo Marathon champion Cresencio Salud and flex his flamingo and pocket the P75,000 prize.

Can that to reality and illustration.

Salud owns the course record of 2 hours, 25 minutes and 22 seconds while Bunsiyag, who joined the Philippine team after topping last year's finals, has been training in Baguio for almost a year now.

Salud's strongest challenges include two-time national champion Allan Balkonic back to back Vakuli 16-Miler winner Bernardo Dimamiso, last year's runner-up Jamil Langcuda and veterans Rolando Palomeno, Rodolfo Tacalinas, Reynaldo delos Reyes, Diamonte Gaspar and Rolando Cruz.

Former champion and record holder Edgardo Bumatay is willing to be able to run because he is in Doha, Qatar, representing the country in the marathon event of the 15th Asian Games.

Bunsiyag, on the other hand, will be challenged by former champions Lizo Nerdino (2002) and Rovilio Discar (2004) as well as Seconal Capitol Region winner Aldwin Sobrinho. Other runners to watch in the women's side are Christy Sevillano, Gloria Diaz, Ellen Sebastian, Luisa Rosero and Camela Linawit.

More than P700,000 in prize money will be given away including prizes for the 10K, 5K and Fun1Run 3K side events.

The male and female second placers in the 42K run will also receive P50,000 each while the third placers settle for P30,000 apiece.

The top three finishers of this first race will also bring home elegant glass trophies.

The race is also supported by Mayor Lito Atienza's Manila Sports Council headed by son Ali as well as the city governments of Pasay, Paranaque, Makati and Taguig. Pending security during the race are PNP MMDA, PHPBC, PCSW and Philippine Red Cross.

Meanwhile, a carbo loading party will be hosted by Milo tomorrow at the Pearl Executive Club Room in Greenhills, San Juan to honor all finishers. The party starts at 5:30 p.m. For info call 727 9987.

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SPORTSWATCH

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Makati Salpukan stakes P1M

Cavite derby semis today

SPORTS

Wizards zap Mavs streak

WASHINGTON—GILBERT ARENAS POURED in 46 points and Antawn Jamison and Etan Thomas chipped in with double-doubles to help the Washington Wizards snap the Dallas Mavericks' 12-game win streak with a 106-97 victory on Monday.

After opening the season with four straight losses, the Mavericks had been unstoppable, rolling off 12 straight wins, including a 109-80 demolition of Phoenix on Nov. 21.

The Wizards avenged their worst loss of the season by claiming their first win over Dallas. The Washington victory also stopped the Mavericks' new season-short of equaling their franchise record unbeaten run of 14 games.

Washington received double-digit efforts from all five starters. Jamison tallied for 20 points and 11 rebounds and Thomas 10 points and 11 boards.

Caron Butler flirted with a triple-double, contributing 14 points, nine rebounds and seven assists as the Wizards improved to 7-2 at home.

"Our energy was up," Butler told reporters. "We executed our offense and our zone successful.

"I was trying to do everything. Trying to get off the ball, run the offense, and use my versatility as any strength," added the versatile forward. "I wasn't trying to force anything.

"Good things happened. My teammates were making shots. It was just a great win."

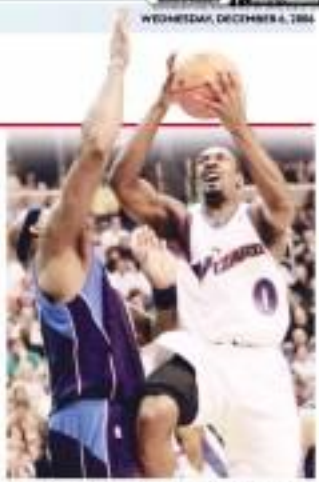
Dirk Nowitzki paced the Mavericks with 27 points and grabbed nine rebounds, and Jerry Stackhouse, Jerome George and Devin Harris each had 14 in the loss.

The Wizards took a commanding 88-68 lead after three quarters but the Mavericks rallied in the fourth, closing the deficit to 102-95 with just over a minute to play.

But the Mavericks could not complete the comeback as the Wizards held on to register their third win in four games.

Meanwhile, Eddy Curry had 26 points and 13 rebounds, and Quentin Richardson and Jerald Gay each had 20 points as the New York Knicks defeated the Memphis Grizzlies, 98-90, to record just their second home win of the season. Reuters

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Washington 106, Dallas 97; New York 98, Memphis 90; San Antonio 105, Golden State 89; Chicago 108, Boston 92; Utah 101, Milwaukee 89; Orlando 92, Sacramento 89; LA Lakers 102, Indiana 87



GILBERT Arenas of the Washington Wizards (right) drives the lane to the basket in front of Erick Dampier of the Dallas Mavericks.

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Yi lifts China past Uzbekistan

DOHA, QATAR—NBA PROSPECT YI JIANLIAN scored 23 points Monday as China beat Uzbekistan, 91-68, for its second straight win in the 15th Asian Games' basketball tournament here.

Han Yue led the winners with 22 points, while Akbarzoda Ikrobir scored 24 points for Uzbekistan.

Yi, who has been given permission by his Chinese club to consider overseas offers, is expected to be chosen high up in next June's NBA draft.

He was six for 10 from the floor to field goals Monday and hit six nine free throws in 10 attempts after being fouled eight times in the game. He also had eight rebounds.

In other games Monday, Taiwan edged Kazakhstan, 81-79, and Japan beat Lebanon, 78-67. The results left Japan and China with 2-0 marks atop Group B, Lebanon and Taiwan at 1-1 and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan 0-2. AP

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HOMEGROWN

Race for semifinal slots picks up pace

FIVE-TIMER JOCKEY FOR POSition as two semifinal slots remain up for grabs in Group A of the 100M Flying V Homegrown Invitational Cup.

The Far Eastern Taurasians, tied with the Jose Rizal Heralders and the Letran Knights at 2-2, will take on the San Sebastian Stags at noon today at the Philsports Arena.

Letran will battle the University of the East Warriors at 2 p.m., while the University of the Philippines Maroons and the Ateneo Blue Eagles clash at 4 p.m.

All will cop the elimination round versus NCAA champion San Beda Lions at 6 p.m.

The La Salle Archers and the University of the East Warriors already entered Final Four berths after topping Group B.

The ADU University of Assumption Tamaraws wrapped up their elimination run at 2-3, but remain in semifinal contention in Group A.

First, the Eagles, languishing at 1-3, have a slim chance to forge a tie and advance to the next round.

In the event teams finish with similar records, the team with the superior rankings quotient will advance to the Final Four.

Surprisingly struggling, the Eagles and the Maroons have been at the bottom of their respective group throughout the tournament.

The Maroons meet rematch as they rally versus team in Group B, while the Eagles' only triumph came in a double-overtime victory over San Sebastian, 82-81.

Schools only play against teams in the opposing group during the elimination round.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the semifinal round. But this time, teams compete within their group in a knockout format.

Seeding up their overtures, the Archers swept the elimination at 7-0 in Group A.

The Warriors will try to accomplish the same feat versus the Knights, who are coming off a 77-70 loss to the Lions. Antonio M. Ryan

Roach dares top fighters: Take on 'Boom Boom'

By Sabrina Laginilla
Contributor

LOS ANGELES—TRAINER FREDdie Roach has dared the top fighters in the world to line themselves up for a fight with undefeated Filipino Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista.

"Line them all up. No problem," Roach told this writer in an interview yesterday at the Wild Card Gym where Bautista bade farewell to his seasoned trainer before flying to Manila with his team.

Bautista is set to arrive today in Manila accompanied by his Filipino promoter Sammy Gello-nido and trainer Edito Villamor.

Bautista kept his slate clean with a scintillating fourth-round TKO of Brazilian Giovanni Andrade in Tampa, Florida.

Roach is set to fly to Manila on Dec. 14 to attend to the baptism of Manny Pacquiao's daughter as well as the boxing inauguration of the Filipino icon.

In Manila, Bautista is set to meet with the media, including television giants ABS-CBN and Solar Sports.

Meanwhile, the World Cup of boxing is fast taking shape as Gello-nido is currently negotiating with Golden Boy Promotions top executives and international matchmaker Enrique Lewis Jr.

Gello-nido stressed that the Cup will most likely take place on Feb. 23, 2007, with Bautista likely to headline the historic event featuring Filipino challengers against Mexican world champions.

IN THIS ISSUE
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20-yr treasury bond rate falls to 8% /B2

BUSINESS
Editor Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

DMCI group acquires water concession

Bid of $447.23M clinches stake in Maynilad

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE CONSORTIUM OF DMCI HOLDINGS INC. AND Metro Pacific Holdings Inc. has won the right to supply water to Metro Manila's west zone.

The group's $447.23-million offer for the government's 82.9-percent stake in Maynilad Water Services Inc. topped the bid of Manila Water Co. Inc.

MWSI, a unit of the country's oldest conglomerate Ayala Corp., had offered to pay the government $399.99 million for the water concession.

As part of the deal, the consortium is not expected to shoulder the $596-million debt of Maynilad to foreign banks and the country's water regulator. The group will also have to pay the government $56.4 million in concession fees, and post a $200-million performance bond.

"We believe it was an aggressive bid, but we also believe that the company [Maynilad] could be turned around," said Herbert Consunji, DMCI chief financial officer.

The transaction marked the second time the government has sold the water concession in the western part of Metro Manila since 1997.

The regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) last year re-acquired Maynilad from a group of private investors led by conglomerate Benpres Holdings Corp.

DMCI/A2

Inflation at lowest level since '04

By Michelle V. Rivera and Doris C. Dumlao

CONSUMER PRICES EASED 4.7 PERCENT IN November from a year ago, further slowing down to a zero low-year low as a result of a stronger-perceived easing pressure of oil.

The inflation level in November, which was the lowest since June 2004, was within the forecast of 4.3 to 5.2 percent by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). In October, inflation hit 5.4 percent.

Excluding volatile prices of unbroad food and energy items, core inflation likewise eased to 5.7 percent in November, slowing down from the previous month's 5.1 percent.

All commodity groups posted a slower inflation rate in November, except for housing and repairs, that kept to previous month's level of growth in prices.

Data from the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that inflation for food, beverage and tobacco (FBT) decelerated from 5.1 percent in October to 4.9 percent in November; clothing, from 3 percent to 2.9 percent; fuel, light and water (FLW), from 13.4 percent to 11.7 percent; services, from 6.1 percent to 5.4 percent; and miscellaneous items, from 2.7 percent to 2.5 percent.

Inflation rate for food alone settled at 4.9

INFLATION/B2

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

49.19 = $1

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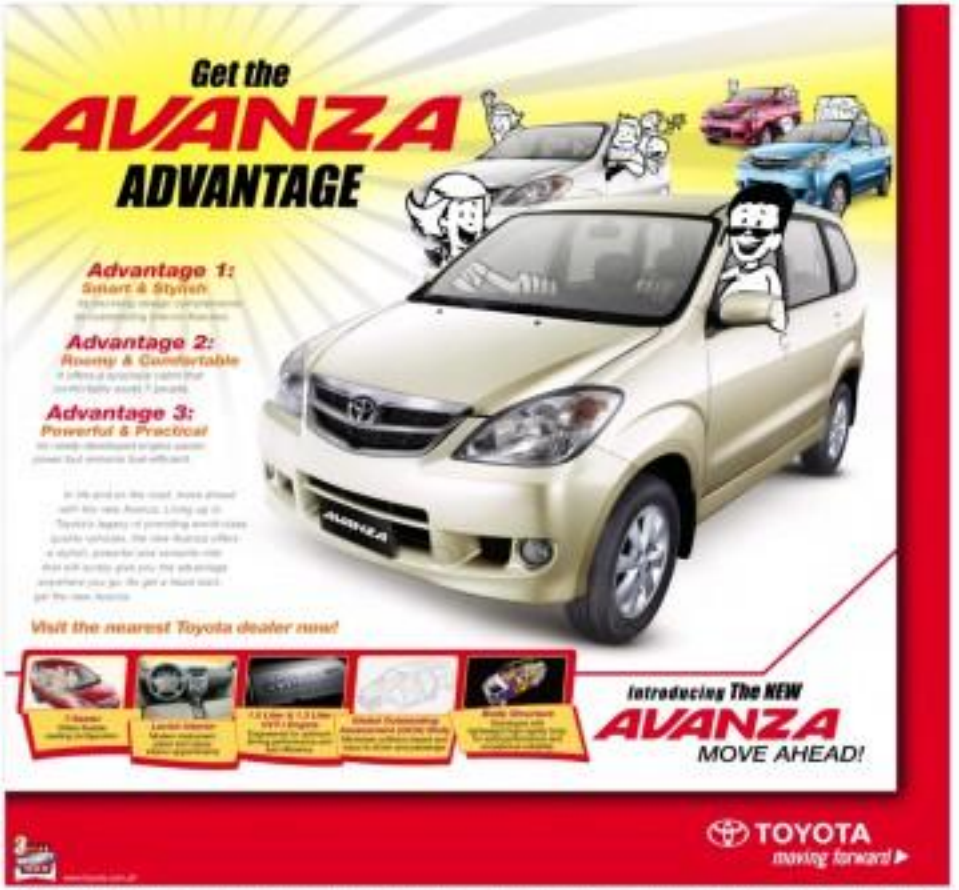
STOCK MARKET

Shares close marginally higher in mixed trading

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

SHARES/B2



20-yr treasury bond rate falls to 8%

Treasury notes lack of investor appetite

By Michelle V. Rerra

THE YIELD ON THE 20-YEAR TREASURY bonds fell to 8 percent yesterday, as auction investors rejected softer-than-expected returns "shows strong faith" due to the lack of appetite for government securities.

The new rate for the long-term government security was 110.1 basis points lower than the 9.201 percent recorded during the last auction on November (1.00 basis points is equal to one percentage point).

Had the Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee accepted all bids for the 20-year bonds, the interest rate would have settled at a higher 8.25 percent, still lower than the 8.301 percent recorded on September.

But National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the BTr opted to just accept some of the bids because the other bids were too high.

Cruz said some banks quoted "absurdly high interest rates."

The 20-year bonds were under-subscribed, with tenders reaching only P9,322 billion, short of the government's debt offer of P6 billion.

The BTr accepted only P4.2222 billion worth of bids.

"The market is waiting for a clearer signal. In the meantime, that [weak appetite for the bids] is fine with us," Cruz said.

The government is now looking ahead for each given its improving fiscal position, he added.

Cruz added that the weak appetite for bonds was partly due to declining interest rates.

"Quite are the days when interest rates were at double digit. When inflation is going back to where it was (in early 2000), and now that the government is bold saving fees, it is hard to increase interest rates," Cruz said.

Inflation slowed down further to settle at a nine-year low low of 4.7 percent in November from 6.4 percent in October.

The deceleration of inflation was anchored on the strengthening peso, which makes imported goods cheaper and easing prices of oil in the world market.

Lower inflation normally results in a decline in interest rates.

Elsewhere in inflation means the increase in investment prices would not significantly cut into the income earned from investments in government securities, therefore does not give enough reason for investors to seek for higher interest rates from these debt instruments.

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SMC to pursue debt offer

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL CORP. STILL INTENDS TO pursue its hybrid debt offer as soon as the independent audit of the books of its beverage subsidiaries is completed, a source privy to the company's affairs said.

Sources said the company was still awaiting the results of an external audit of the beverage group's financial statements of this past three years.

"The intention is to pursue the offer, we need to restructure the debts," the source said.

San Miguel earlier planned to offer $500 million in hybrid bonds next year.

Last April 28, SMC was downgraded one year after was warned that at least a massive hybrid bond offer after reports surfaced that it had allegedly overstated the value of its beverage subsidiaries.

Proceeds from San Miguel's proposed hybrid offer seems to be used to pay existing debt worth roughly $500 million and for general corporate purposes, including capital expenditures and future acquisitions, the company's preliminary prospectus for the offering had indicated.

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PNOC to light up more homes

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO. (PNOC) has entered into an Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) to provide electricity to 7,000 households in 96 barangays in Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao and Kalinga-Apayao.

Under their memorandum of agreement, PNOC will provide the solar home systems that will be used in the barangay electrification project, while Aseaw will identify the specific areas and households where these will be installed.

Apart from PNOC and Aseaw, Shell Solar Philippines Corp. will also be participating in the project by installing, testing and providing maintenance services for the solar home systems.

This is part of Shell Solar's service contract with the PNOC under the PNOC Solar Home System Distribution Project.

PNOC had earlier partnered with Aboitiz Foundation to provide electricity to 2,000 families in 10 barangays, also in Aseaw-identified areas.

The same firm's Solar Homes System Distribution Project, which it aims to complete by mid-2007, is a joint undertaking by PNOC, the Department of Energy and Shell Solar.

It involves the sale and distribution of 15,100 solar home systems to entities scattered around the country within five years.

The areas covered include parts of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central Visayas and Mindanao.

DMCI group acquires . . .

From page B1

The weight of debt payments following the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis had led to heavy losses for Manpilacil, with Benpres opting to put the asset under under rehabilitation before it exited the concession completely in July 2003.

Eleven investor groups, including foreign firms, had expressed initial interest in Manpilacil, but only DMCI and Manila Water remained in the final race.

French utilities group Suez SA, which holds the remaining 16 percent in Manpilacil, said it was keeping its stake in the water utility.

"We have no intention to sell the 16 percent," said Jacques Leinekel, Suez group representative. "And as of now we are glad that we have a core partner."

The French company's stake is valued at $4.226 million.

Part of the proceeds from the bidding will be used to finance Manpilacil's three-year expansion program.

Consunji stated that the company's fundamentals are good since the government took over almost two years ago.

He said that Manpilacil recorded a P2.1 billion net income in 2006. By the end of the year, the company is expected to log P2.6 billion.

The concessionaire will take over such core business operations of the area over for the remaining years of the 25-year concession.

Manpilacil covers all of Metro Manila, except San Andres and Ilia Ana, parts of Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Pateros, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, Malabon, Cavite City and some towns of Cavite province. With a report from Reuters

MVP's HK$1 challenge

MANUEL V. PANGILINAN is about to open a new Hong Kong front in his PLDT-Smart challenge to snatch a large chunk of the overseas business from the established Philippine banks in the Eastern Crown Colony.

According to the grapevine, Smart is quietly testing a MEGApeso transaction cellular phone remittance scheme, closely tied to Smart's mobile phone network, that will let them (the agents) MEGA transactions for clear a number of Philippine banks and finance companies through Filipino branches for remittances to the Philippines.

In preparation for the launch, Smart has already formed new shop spaces in Wyndham House, the popular mall in Hong Kong's Central district that is home to banks, cargo forwarders, grocery, fast-food shops, and beauty parlors, catering to the HK$ 1.6-million/1,120,000 Filipinos domiciled there.

The Hong Kong branches of Philippine banks are apparently so threatened by Smart's ambitious new (last fond, offshore love lately) spending the pounds of OFW remittings to deliver a subtle message—it is (arguably) safer to entrust money through the banks.

According to a Hong Kong-based financial journalist, Jennifer Gonzalez, even the industry's Philippine Bankers Club of Hong Kong has gotten into the act, sponsoring a singing contest for overseas Filipino bankers and relationship officers.

Economic helpers runs a legally purchased minimum wage of $1,260 (about P20,864) a month.

Assuming rank-and-file remittances of HK$1,000 (16,400) to the Philippines a month, the Hong Kong money flow easily translates to HK$120 million (P768 million), month after month.

Joker mightier than Pen

SEN. JOKER ARROYO has a fitting gift for Manila Peninsula boardie Francis L. Lim as the latter's hotel celebrates its 30th anniversary tomorrow.

According to the grapevine, as we've recently run into the Lim scion at the restaurant-and-then some and there, the maverick senator told Pt. Lim that he was dropping the criminal complaint he had filed against Lim and top-tier officials.

The criminal complaint was an offshoot of Arroyo, then a Makati congressman, and Teodoro Locsin Jr., now a Makati congressman, representing Arroyo's district, having on the receiving end of verbal and physical abuse heaped by the apparently drunk foreign guest at the Hai lobby.

Lim and other Pen officials were included in the criminal complaint by Arroyo and Locsin after the experience Pen general manager nabbed the guest out of the hotel.

Thereafter, the Hai Gil also hastily left the country. With his ally now posting a threat to the president, Locsin is now expected to ask Arroyo to let the filing of the dismissals evolve more.

Incidentally Lim and other Hi-space partners have now been reduced to minority partners of the hotel, after selling 75 percent control of the Pen to The Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels Ltd. in exchange for cash and shares of stock of the Hong Kong-listed hotel and property conglomerate last year.

To mark the Pen's grand anniversary, Hong Kong billionaire and Peninsula chain owner Sir Michael Kadoorie is flying in to meet and thank partners and loyal patrons, as well as unveil the hotel's new look, following a recent renovation.

Heard through the grapevine

TROUBLE between former Toyota executive Sales Jacobbaza Rosario Ellevera Jr. and his son Ricardo Jr. has taken a turn for the worse.

Ricardo Jr. has now initiated legal and falsification complaint against his father's second wife, Ruby or Pete. Loren Cillan-Ellevera, claiming that the couple conspired to sell stocks in their estranged husband, one Ramon Javier.

An incensed Ricardo Cillan-Ellevera, counsel of Silvano St., immediately shot down the bizarre allegation as "completely false," adding that he himself had prepared the legal separation papers for the present Mrs. Ellevera.

(Email: columns@abs-cbn.biz)

Shares close . . .

From page B1

The broader all-share index rose 4.94 points to 1,751.22.

Losers beat gainers 87 to 60, with 67 stocks unchanged.

Turnover was 1.76 billion shares worth P1.9 billion ($40.9 million). The peso to middays was (0.49 $44 to the dollar.

SUET jumped 595 to P2,000. DMCI Holdings rose 30 centavos to P8.70. Manila Water fell 75 centavos to P

Inflation rate . . .

From page B1

percent in November, down from the 5.2 percent in October.

"The inflation figure for November . . . reinforces the BSP's outlook of a continued moderation in price increases," Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters. "The slowdown in inflation is supported by the recent consolidation in oil prices and the overall appreciation of the peso."

. . . oil appreciating peso helps slow down inflation because it makes the cost of imported goods cheaper. The peso closed at 49.75 against the US dollar in mid-November this year, much stronger than the 54.15 in the same month a year ago.

The BSP also hikes the strengthening of the peso to growth in dollar inflows, partly due to the increase in remittances sent by overseas Filipino workers to their families.

The easing price of oil in the world market also tempered inflation, given that at least 50 percent of the country's oil requirements is imported.

The Department of Energy said Dubai crude, the benchmark used in setting domestic oil prices, averaged at $58.72a barrel in November. Early this year, oil prices had been hitting record highs and even breached the $60-a-barrel level.

The slowdown in inflation took away pressure on the BSP to tighten its monetary policy, although Tetangco said the monetary authority would be keeping a close on the inflationary impact of the growing liquidity in the system.

Next year, the BSP expects the inflation rate to return to the government's target level of 4-5 percent, despite the recent surge in domestic liquidity, which had had last hit a four-year high.

Based on the BSP's report for October, the country's growth in domestic liquidity, or m3, accelerated further to 16.1 percent from 14.8 percent in September. It was the highest level seen by the country since 2002, and was in excess of the 13.5 percent minimum growth desired by the BSP.

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IPO glory days seen back

Analysts expect trend in stock market to continue

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MARKET ANALYSTS SEE A VIBRANT market for initial public offerings (IPO) in the coming months, with fresh capital raised through the stock market exceeding levels not seen since 1994.

What keep investors enamored in equity offerings are the sharp decline in domestic interest rates and a booming economy, helped by higher tax collections and a growing services sector, they said.

"If the cost of money is going down, businesses are going to be more aggressive [in their activities]," SEB Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc. managing director Marcelito Ordonez said.

"Banks are doing well because interest rates are so low that investors are looking for higher yielding instruments—even if these are stocks," Eduardo Francisco, BDO Unibank Asset Investment Corp. executive vice-president, said.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate averaged at only 4.837 percent as of Nov. 8, data showed.

Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) records showed that the investor appetite to raise capital from the stock market. However, he said, a turnaround is seen since beginning last 2004, backed by accelerating liquidity flows, allowed offerings to regain their luster.

"Market turnover has tripled from a low of P500 million in 2003 to P2.16 billion in 2006 to ring the offer from the last few months," Rabia said.

The success of the latest offerings, including the sale of additional shares and OPSs, sparked renewed hunger for stocks.

"Their recent success reminds us of the strength of Bonpen Holdings Corp., Jollibee Foods Corp. and Petron Corp. during their buyings in the early mid-

IPO GLORY SEEN BACK

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Singapore, Jakarta marts hit new highs

Malaysian, Philippine stocks also climbed

SINGAPORE—SINGAPORE STOCKS ROSE 0.96 percent to a record high on Tuesday, led by banks such as UBS Group HoldingsAG, as investors bet that lenders would benefit from financing the construction of two planned casinos.

The Straits Times Index hit an all-time high of 2,879.66 points, beating its previous record high of 2,869.21 points set on June 26.

Indonesian stocks jumped 2 percent and also hit an all-time high of 1,760.458 points. The previous record high of 1,738.406 points was struck on Nov. 27.

Elsewhere, Malaysian shares climbed 0.96 percent, and Philippine shares added 0.68 percent.

The Thai market was closed on Tuesday for the King's birthday.

In Singapore, analysts said investors eyed banks ahead of the government's announcement—expected this week—of the winning bid for the city-state's second casino resort. The deal is worth as much as $3.5 billion.

"People are looking at the banks because they may benefit from financing the casinos," said Rajesh Jadeja, the research head at Fraser Investors.

DBS, Southeast Asia's largest lender, rose 1.4 percent to hit its highest level in over six years.

United Overseas Bank, Singapore's second-largest lender, climbed 1.6 percent, and Overseas Chinese Banking Corp. added 1.3 percent to a record high.

Genting International, a member of one of the three consortia that have submitted bids to build the resort, jumped 2.5 percent to a record high. The stock surged 14.5 percent on Monday.

Looking ahead, strategists said that investors should reduce their risk because cyclical markets looked overbought, and that corporate earnings may disappoint next year amid a slowing US economy.

The 34-day relative strength indices for the key stock indices in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia all stand above 70 points, indicating that markets are overbought.

"The key thing is to reduce risk appetites," said Sean Darby, the regional strategist at Nomura, adding that share prices have not learned in a slowdown in the United States, their biggest export market.

In Jakarta, Telkom Indonesia, the largest telecommunications company, jumped 5 percent on renewed bids on foreign buying.

The Indonesian market has pulled in $1.8 billion worth of foreign investments in the year to date, compared with a net outflow of $1.6 billion in 2005, according to Nomura analyst Kenneth Chan.

In Kuala Lumpur, dominant telephone provider Telekom Malaysia Bhd led gains with a 2.2 percent jump.

The local media said on Tuesday that the telecom was in talks with several parties on a sell its public pay phone business as part of its plan to dispose of "telecom operations the deal.

But shares in New Straits Times Press and smaller rival publisher Utusan Melayu combined 15.3 percent and 10.4 percent respectively, after New Straits Times failed to finish a deal to take over Utusan Melayu on Monday. Sources told Reuters that political pressure scuppered the deal.

Local media had reported that the United Malays National Organization—Utusan Melayu's controlling shareholder and the key party in Malaysia's government—feared that the daily would lose its sheenly if taken over by New Straits Times. Reuters

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Yahoo taps into massive OFW market

INTERNET GIANT YAHOO ON TUESDAY unveiled a global project aimed at tapping into the vast market of Filipino overseas workers.

The "Pinoy Connect" project features a special website designed to meet the needs of an estimated eight million Filipinos, or 10 percent of the population, working abroad as well as their families back home.

In the first nine months of 2006, overseas Filipinos remitted an estimated $9.23 billion, providing critical support to the economy. This does not include cash sent home through informal, nonbank channels.

The new site www.yahoo.com.ph/pinoy features news, entertainment, mobile services, chat groups, mobile communications and money messaging services targets Filipino workers and their dependents.

A press statement from Yahoo! said the project had the support of Philippine government agencies, private firms and the Roman Catholic church, to which a majority of Filipinos belong.

"We believe the internet can transform lives and we believe that Yahoo! can make a difference for Filipinos living around the world who need to communicate and stay in touch," said Bruce Rohrbasser, managing director of Yahoo! Southeast Asia.

Leading Philippines based portals have also tapped into the overseas workers' market, offering a wide range of services such as remittances and home sites.

A new building boom is sweeping across Manila and fast-growing areas, fueled by cash-flush overseas Filipinos looking to invest in retirement homes.

Rising property prices are helping drive the surge of Philippine share prices to levels not seen since the mid-1997 Asian financial crisis. AFP

Banks' exposure in real estate sector up 2.2%

Drug price scheme questioned

LOCAL PHARMACEUTICAL FIRM Thempharma recently questioned a price discount scheme launched by rival Pfizer (Philippines) Inc. for its anti-hypertensive drug.

In a statement, the company said the scheme appeared to be a "marketing ploy to preempt the introduction of a more affordable competing brand."

Thempharma said there was "a perception that the 50 percent discount offering of Pfizer was only a temporary marketing scheme to protect its anti-hypertensive product and not meant to fit generics."

"This perception was triggered by Pfizer's unprecedented 20 percent price increase prior to implementing the discount program," Thempharma said in the statement.

The local pharmaceutical firm launched last month an anti-hypertensive drug called Amosar, whose price was 60 percent lower than that of the competing drug.

"If Pfizer is sincere in its desire to bring down the cost of his product or to benefit a greater number of patients permanently, a direct and annual price roll back should have already been done by the company," it added.

The government earlier urged the Philippine pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors to help provide the public with "quality medicines at affordable prices" in order to help lower the incidence of the leading causes of death in the country.

In a press briefing, Dr. Esperanza Cabral, social welfare and development secretary, said heart and vascular diseases continue to top the list of the leading causes of mortality in the country. She expressed concern new trends which show that some 17.6 percent of the total population could be afflicted with hypertension.

Expected construction boom to fuel growth

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COMMERCIAL BANKING industry's exposure in the real estate sector rose by 2.2 percent as of end-September to Php 232.0.8 billion from the level in June, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

Bank real estate loans and investments in securities issued by real estate companies from July to September amounted to P32.2 billion and P32.0 billion, respectively.

Compared to year-ago level, the banks' real estate lending and investment portfolio of real loans this year expanded by 6.6 percent versus the comparative level of P205 billion.

The industry's real estate lending, alone, expanded by 1.1 percent to P180.5 billion. The modest is a slightly higher rate of real estate loans to total outstanding loans in the third quarter to 11.6 percent from the previous quarter's 11.7 percent. This ratio was however slightly lower from year-ago's 11.9 percent.

The bank paper accounted for 67.4 percent of total real estate loans while the banks' trust departments took the remaining 2.6 percent.

Real estate loans used for the development of properties for commercial purposes, including infrastructure projects, amounted to P182.4 billion or 85 percent of the banking sector's total real estate loans.

The remaining P33.2 billion or 17 percent were to individual borrowers.

The banks' past due real estate loans in the third quarter rose to 3.8 percent or P27.2 billion from the previous quarter's P25.8 billion. This pushed the ratio of past due loans to total real estate loans to 13.9 percent from the previous quarter's 13.3 percent.

The booming property sector, fuelled by inflows from overseas Filipinos and the growing popularity of condominium living, is seen to placing the mounting telecommunications centers as the new darling of investors in the Philippines.

Deutsche Bank, in its earlier Philippine strategy research paper, said that while mobile phones had busted out all other items in the wagonet head because hold budget in the last five years, fixed-line home keeping may be becoming the "new thing" in this country.

In 2005, low vacancies in the residential and office markets began to push yields up and a year after, experienced began in earnest in the residential sector.

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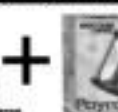

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Seair unveils expansion plans

By Riaz T. Chichioco

FORMER FLIGHTSIDE attendant-turned-president-thrilled... Zapanta has more than one of entitlement to become the chief executive officer of South-East Asian Airlines (Seair) and help the budget carrier become a major player in the local airline industry.

Seair officials said Zapanta, who arrived in 2004, had led the flag carrier to unprecedented profitability and that he could work the same magic for Seair.

"I believe that my experience in the position comes at the right time as Seair faces new challenges with its growth and expansion," Zapanta said in a media briefing.

The Cebu-based airline is expecting revenue to hit P1 billion this year, up from P600 million in 2005.

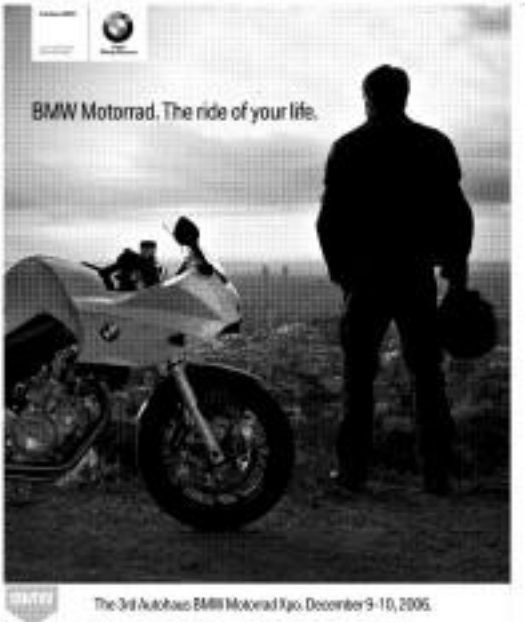
Aside from growing the local business, Zapanta intends to lead the airline's regional expansion, with Singapore and Macau as the initial targets.

Seair has signed a code-share with Singapore's low-fare airline Tiger Airways to promote Philippine travel and tourism, and boost Seair's regional market presence.

Locally, expansion would be pushed by adding Clark-Cebu and Clark-Davao flights as Seair's 16 routes serving 14 local airports destinations.

To cope with expansion, Zapanta said Seair would bring in two ATR Airbus planes by the first quarter of 2007.

The 1.8b planes will be deployed in domestic and regional routes as soon as the Civil Aeronautics Board grants the necessary legislative approvals, Zapanta said.



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Peso seen to stay strong in '07

BRITISH BANKING GIANT HSBC IS BULLISH on Philippine peso and sovereign bonds given recent strides in the government's fiscal consolidation and the favorable impact of the prospective easing of key interest rates in the United States.

In separate briefings yesterday, HSBC country treasurer Jose Serralde Wilson said the peso would likely stabilize at 49.25-49.50 by the end of this year and to further appreciate to 47-48 against the US dollar by next year.

Wilson said the sustained inflow of remittances from overseas Filipino workers would likely keep the peso strong versus the greenback, but noted that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would likely come in to "manage" the rebasing.

He said the BSP would likely siphon off the dollars in the system and retire more foreign debts ahead of maturity.

"Obvious remittances, political stability and continued fiscal discipline will see the dollar to the peso," Wilson said.

He noted that the peso's appreciation was also a key factor in the decompressing of other currencies against the weakening US dollar. For instance, the Chinese renminbi was seen rising to 7.55 next year from 7.85 against the US dollar this year.

HSBC also believes that the US Federal Reserve rate, the direction of which has driven offshore investors out of emerging markets early this year, had already peaked at its current level of 5.25 percent and would likely be slashed to 4 percent next year. It expects a quarter of a percent cut each in May, June, August, September and October next year.

Lower yields in the world's largest economy usually encourage investors to seek for investment opportunities in emerging markets.

And among emerging markets, they still look for markets with good stories to tell, and the Philippines has had a good story to tell, "We've said, noting that the government has made progress in keeping fiscal deficits at bay.

As such, he noted that credit default swaps of the Philippine foreign currency bonds or RoPs were now at all-time low levels of 125 basis points, from the height of 450 basis in 2005.

CDS, an instrument usually offered by banks, is a security against losses in case of a borrower's default. Its pricing thus reflects the market's confidence on an issuer's creditworthiness.

"This is only second time to Brazil's (CCB+ of) 11.6," Wilson said.

Aside from Brazil, sovereign issuers with a similar BB credit rating were trailing with a higher CDS, such as Indonesia (120), Turkey (136) and Venezuela (160), (Boris C. Chandler)

IPO glory days

From page B4

1998," he added.

Data from the PSE showed that in 1994, the stock market saw IPO activity peak with 21 companies listed on the stock market. Those included: IM Prime Holdings, Kingsland Properties and Solidanga Inc., Universal Robina Corp., Belava Corp., Absolut Equity Warrants, Evotion Bottling Corp. and Cebu Holdings.

Some P17.4 billion was raised in that year. Only the years, the value dwindled to a low of P286.34 million in 2003 with only four companies hearing the stock market.

With the economy taking a positive turn, the market started to flourish again in 2005, when companies raised a total of P33.5 billion. This year saw four companies P5.1 billion already raised through the exchange.

"Investor confidence is evident in the overwhelming public interest of Alliance Select International, the latest IPO. On listing day, more orders and investors officially closed 50 percent up from its IPO price of P1.26," Bolilla said.

Since 2005, the stock market has seen major names joining its roster, including SM Investments Corp., Manila Water Company Inc., Puma Gas Corp., Cemex Inc. Gas and Alliance Select International.

Investment bankers are hoping that 2006 will finish with a bang, with the most awaited IPO of the year, that of government-owned producer PSOC-Energy Development Corp.

Investors have been salivating over listings in the last few days in preparation for PSOC-Energy's maiden offer on Dec. 13, touted as the largest this year.

But, a the market ready to absorb all these IPOs?

"The last time most of the IPOs and follow on offers are oversubscribed is proof that the market can absorb these offerings," an analyst of a foreign brokerage said.

"The trend in the market doesn't look like it will reverse. Next year is an election year which is good for the economy because consumer spending will increase," Joseph Retiza, president of Eagle Equities Inc., said.

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The ultimate Camry

ON THE ROAD

Aiko Yee-Abe Hendoza

IN THIS COLUMN TWO YEARS AGO about the 2004 Camry 3.0-liter V6 (3MZ-FE) DOHC, I wrote that the only things that Toyota's otherwise flawless flagship lacked were a telescopic steering wheel, cruise control and a traction or vehicle skid control system.

Well, guess what? Among the new standard features of the 2007 Camry 3.5Q, which was launched last September, are a tilt and telescopic adjustable steering wheel, cruise control and Vehicle Stability Control.

And to make it even better—if not positively perfect—Toyota Motor Corp. dropped into the engine bay a new 3.5-liter, 24-valve, variable valve VVT-i) powerplant delivering 277 ps@6,200 rpm and max torque of 340 Nm@4,700 rpm—an additional 65 ps in power and 48 Newton meters in torque—mated to a new, velocity-sensed sequential-sport automatic transmission with manual-mode flat that replaces the five-speed tranny of the outgoing model.

New power

The rest immediately feel the new power once you step on the gas. The ninth-generation Camry breaks from zero to 100 kilometers per hour in a smooth, 6.5-seconds, pretty impressive for what is categorized as an executive sedan commercially use. That is not to say that the Camry is a sport sedan like the Subarus or the Mazdas; yet its more potent engine may have required the inclusion of Vehicle Stability Control to keep the front wheels from it's front-wheel drive) from breaking traction every time your right foot gets overenthusiastic. VSC keeps the new Camry stable and secure as it has always traditionally been.

While the new Camry is no sport sedan, it is comfortably loaded with luxury features to make you wonder why anyone would buy a higher-priced premium German brand. The plush, leather-clad interior is spacious in all dimensions with an eight-way power driver's seat and plenty of room in the reclining rear seats. The audio, stereo and M.I.D. (multi-information display) switches and cruise control are mounted on the steering wheel, independent dual-zone climate controls are at hand plus a glovebox cooler centered on top of the dash.

The list of new high-tech specs in the 2007 Camry 3.5Q is substantial, including a stainless door kick sills across entry system and remote engine starter that eliminates the need to pull out the key or even touch the switch to start. A smart push-start system ignites the engine with a quick press of the dash-mounted button. The adaptive front-lighting HID (high intensity discharge) headlamps are equipped with automatic leveling device that adjusts the side-mirrors have integrated turn signal lights.

THE CAMRY 3.5 packs a 277-hp Dual VVT-i Engine

INSIDE, plush leather, wood grain trim and climate control

PLENTY of room in the reclining back seat

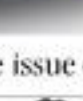
Retained

The 16-valve, variable-motion, intelligent (smart) technology with SRS playback capability and auxiliary input jack for iPods, an stereo speakers, power rear window/side sunroof, chromium and body color mirrors, automatic rain-sensing wipers, classy leather seats and wood grain trim in the dashboard, steering wheel and shift are retained, this time with chrome accents.

Also retained are the excellent build quality and refined craftsmanship, the huge boot and roomy interior due to independent suspension all around with MacPherson struts up front and dual-link struts at the rear, and four levels of NVH (noise, vibration, harshness) setups for sound-free motor as high speeds.

THE '07 Camry has more aggressively rakish styling

Tita Gertie and the issue of scooters



MY DRIFT

Andrew Dalton

MY TITA GERTIE IS MANY things to a myriad of people: relentless, proud mother, women's rights advocate, darling mother to a recently married lesbian couple and, from the picture, one of those chest-thumping fish lovers of the Philippine trade will never cease to marvel at. Incidentally, I personally think she's rather the cook nor bar keeper. I get an image of trying to flatter my way to scrubbers free meal, she must still stay.

For the purpose of this column drought, rather really matters is that she still acts as one of the main chief of drivers around town. While many of her own temperance yet probably being disenchanted she used me—first it fit the metaphor—in our conversation with Tita Gertie confirmed the fact that she still pretty much drives herself around on a daily basis. A startling testament to how gracefully she's aged? Again, I'll quit while I'm ahead.

'Scooter scourge'

As with all non-sailors, we have specific issues and peeves that just need to get aired, even just to fight, half-decent banter sometimes. I've had complaints on engine noise up in my in public and begin ranting about what their current automotive ailment is. It is the picture that came into the column. I tell you, it looks too loosely approachable; something really ironic for a man with as much skill as lockside manners as a taxi-goer about to explain an inspiration.

Tita Gertie knows this about me but still decided to bring up something that's been troubling her daily commute. Of all the issues she takes up, it has to be the one that just have some of the desperate times drawn across Philippine motoring: our nation's "scooter scourge"—and she does have a point.

Well, before everyone with a motorcycle will only continue to grow.

Here's the Mah though. Couple the large numbers with the Filipino penchant for disregarding traffic rules and compound them with our already overburdened road networks and the recipe for chaos and more accidents and injuries.

It is not evil the behavior of the automobile-driving segment of the Philippine nation is at all universally spotless or commendable. In a bunch of instances, there will always be bad or worse cases, it just seems like our bad-an-meter reports increases disproportionately when it comes to those who choose to commute on scooters with cavalier concern for safety.

First-time motorists

Sadness, though it plays a huge part of the problem, cannot be the sole reason for the dangers posed by the numerous "scooter" rides. I will be hard-nosed to say that a fair number of those who depend on zip under-bone for their daily mobility are first-time motorists. It is either obvious from their behavior or our roads.

The solutions that will be proposed here are not radical, nor are they particularly unique for that matter. If we look to the future and accept our shortcomings in the fact that our traffic-cops will inevitably take on a stronger role (shudder) down the line, something has to give—and all road users will have to be involved.

The big step should be toward schooling. This is not up with the driver's license issuers, I'm sure the Department of Transportation and Communications should be aware that they willing to put up riding clinics and safety seminars for their clientele. If they are not already doing this, then it is their responsibility to every consumer. They are already making a killing with the sheer number of people that they are serving, so nothing that is easy per-buck after will cut a sucker-hater altogether.

Nissan, Subaru break the SUV mold

To page B10

tailored to safety safety that helps the driver avoid an accident and not just survive one," explained Adol Jerman, marketing manager of Sime Darby Pilipinas. On exclusive distributor of the Subaru brand in the country.

But what separates the Forester from other holistic models is its efficient packaging. Delivering up to 1,619 liters of cargo room in a truly compact vehicle, the Forester fulfills seating needs in one clever package.

The two SUVs are positioned differently in the marketplace. The luxury-laden Murano is in the full-size category (prices starting at P2.048 million) while the sprightly Forester is in the compact category (prices starting at P1.456 million for the 2.5 ST). Both, however, have a package that very few SUVs in their category could match in terms of versatility.

Indeed, the Murano and the Forester 2.5 ST bring it all over-top, ride handling on the highway, smoother ride sharper turn-in and more precise steering, passages (or go-throughs) good fuel economy and excellent safety rating.

MOTORSCOPE

Better motorist service with LTO IT systems upgrade

SUBSCRIBE SOLUTIONS CORP., A LEADING PROVIDER OF enterprise solutions here and software, recently embedded into an agreement with Shoreham Corp. for occupants of the Land Transportation Office's (LTO) plans.

The upgrade includes the addition of Sybase Mobile Suite for application development tool; an the Sybase PowerBuilder, the Sybase Adaptive Server Enterprise (ASE), the Enterprise Application Edge and the Sybase Replication Server for single-to-Transaction database with data replication.

The Sybase Power builder is an industry-leading rapid application development tool for mission-critical processes by through tight integration of design, modeling, development management. The ASE, on the other hand, is a powerful data management platform that provides real-time management platform so that providers and form to the LTO's mission-critical, transaction-intensive applications. The Sybase EA server immediately increases the flexibility and lowers the costs of managing multiple data management platforms, providing to the national, messenger needs, application and system integration services and at price, development and deployment of applications.

The Land Transportation Office's upgrades will enable Shoreham to deliver a highly reliable information to the LTO IT system. Shoreham delivers the LTO's Driver's Licensing System (DLS), Motor Vehicle Registration System (MVRS), Law Enforcement and Traffic Adjudication System (Lets), Shoreham-Interface, Assemblies, Interfaces, Database Recording System (MARCRS) and Revenue Collection System.

The confirmation to come to the growth and requirements for the LTO. IT project has called for a reliable reliable network in place. The partnership of Shoreham and Sybase addresses the commitment of Shoreham to the LTO by offering an upgrade on the LTO IT system to meet present and future needs.

"We are fulfilling our commitment to deliver only the most reliable IT systems for the LTO and thanks to Sybase, we will deliver this commitment with utmost efficiency," says Mike Edmondson, Shoreham VP for Project Oversight and Technical Solutions.

Ford beefs up warranty on Focus

FINDING NEW IT'S OWN NICHE TO MARKET TO, FORD, the best quality yet cost-efficient products for its customers. Ford Philippines is now offering a five-year warranty for its Ford Focus vehicles in covering a new warranty benchmark to customer satisfaction and product quality.

The Focus comes has come with more budget-friendly with the extended coverage benefits of up to five years. Aside from selling a new generation of maintenance costs, this gives Focus customers an extra peace of mind when they buy their vehicles.

The industry-leading warranty coverage for the Focus that substantially differ car company offers does not do range, applies to all Ford Focus 1.6L, 1.8L and 2.0L.

With the Ford Premium Extended Warranty, owners of the Ford Focus will have the opportunity to add up to two more years to the standard three-year warranty for maximum coverage.

The warranty also provides protection against unforeseen costs on mechanical or electrical repairs after the original warranty expires. This includes the engine, transmission, vehicle computer control unit, air conditioning systems and factory-supplied audio/video system. What's more, all labor charges associated with the repair or replacement of such parts are also included in the warranty coverage.

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ENTICING DISCERNING CAR BUYERS

Nissan, Subaru break the SUV mold

Text and photos by Charles E. Bolan

A LOT OF VEHICLES TODAY toe the line between a car and a sport utility vehicle, yet a few walk right down the middle, the way the Nissan Murano and the Subaru Forester do.

Quite close toe to unibod "crossovers" and you'll discover that, despite their SUV-like profile, they have the soul of a car—and a pretty sporty one at that.

Indeed, the Murano and the Forester break the mold for non-unibod traditional SUVs that are built off a truck platform (body and frame built as separate structures), those two are built like cars to reduce the body and frame are the same thing as they weigh less and ride low to the ground, like cars.

The result is that while the Murano and Forester offer SUV-like convenience (versatile cargo-carrying space, higher driving position, excellent amounts of seating capacity), they also offer a more comfortable ride, better handling, nimble and less prone to rollovers and best of all, deliver surprising fuel economy.

Puzzling

Take for example the Murano. At first glance, this crossover is a bit of a puzzle. Despite being in the market since April, this writer (who took it recently out of town) still got curiousness relating stares from other drivers who were probably trying to figure out just what they were in the NOT lane.

Indeed, the Murano is kind of an automotive amalgam, designed to look like an SUV on the bottom and a sports sedan on the top—while it sports huge 18-inch wheels and muscular, flared fenders, there's topped by a roofline that is prone to comparisons.

While it is stylishly designed like a sports car with its prominent inclined front grille, upswept D-pillars, a sloping hoodline and steeply raked windshield), the Murano is powered by a muscular 240-horsepower, 3.5-liter V6 engine under the hood.

"Murano's radical design is a real head turner. It includes such of Nissan's iconic design language. The trapezoidal hood and tail lamps echo those found on our 350Z sports car. Another distinctive styling cue is the shape of the rearmost side window, which is triangular and has a sharply upswept lower edge," described Raymond Taballero, Nissan Motor Philippines senior manager for marketing and product planning.

No different

The Forester is another interesting crossover. While the 2.0 XT (turbocharged) variant this writer recently drove may look like an unassuming wagon/SUV crossover, it performs like a sports sedan—nimble and spry on road and is able to blow away vehicles between stoplights.

Powered by a 2.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine—the same one that powers the iconic Subaru Impreza WRX—the Forester 2.5 XT generates a hefty 227 hp, that could catapult its 1,514-kg body from 0 to 100kph, in just over 6 seconds!

The Forester 2.5 XT, like every Subaru vehicle, also boasts traction by using a boxer engine [called "boxers" because the pistons repeatedly punch outward], (also known as a horizontally opposed engine.

Besides Subaru, only Porsche uses this engine architecture, which is known for providing great power in a compact package, and a low "dock height that helps lower the center of mass—for the uninitiated—while ride and handling enhancement when doing quick turns).

Perfected the design

Subaru has perfected this design. And like the rest of Subaru models, the Forester boasts unsurpassed stability through turns, superior control and fine maneuverability so body will when cornering. Those are all part of Subaru's com-

BUY ONE
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(FREE 1-yr (or 20,000 kms, whichever comes first)
Periodic Maintenance Services
FREE 3-yr LTO Registration
99K DP
ANY OPTRA SEDAN MODEL
FREE 1-yr Auto Insurance Fee
(FREE 1-yr (or 20,000 kms, whichever comes first)
Periodic Maintenance Services
FREE 3-yr LTO Registration
79K DP
AVEO 1.5 LS MT/AT
FREE 1-yr Auto Insurance Fee
FREE 1-yr (or 20,000 kms, whichever comes first)
Periodic Maintenance Services
FREE 3-yr LTO Registration
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WIN ONE!
On top of a low down payment and fantastic freebies, a purchase of any Optra or Aveo 1.5L gives you a chance to win a Chevrolet Spark. So get the best out of owning a Chevrolet. There's only a small price to pay for. Or, it could ever be free.
CHEVROLET WE'LL BE THERE.

2bU "to be you" to be

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chiole Bancil-Perfecto Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

Christmas Part 1

CATALOGUE 2006

We all know Christmas is more than just exchanging gifts. But buying and wrapping presents to give away has become such a part of this season that we just can't ignore it. And with endless traffic and throngs of people jostling for shopping space, it can become a stressful Christmas for you. So we at 2bU have decided to make things a little easier. We went around the malls—and even cyberspace—and tried to find memorable gifts that we're guessing you'd find on your loved ones' lists. Think of us as your personal Christmas shoppers. And we're not done yet. We have more gift ideas for you next week!

GIFT GUIDE

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Rudy Baguios, Rene Mendoza and Pam Pastor

FOR THE INSOMNIAC

FOR THE MODERN-DAY ADAM AND EVE

FOR THE MAKEUP ADDICT

The Answer to FALLING HAIR:

Hair Reinforcer Remedy

Falling hair should not be taken lightly. It is not just a cosmetic problem, it can lead to something more serious. If left untreated, this condition can progress to extensive hair loss and may result in permanently thinning hair. Svenson has formulated the Hair Reinforcer Remedy to control your falling hair and bring back its lushness and volume. You won't need to worry about your falling hair any more.

Start your hair. Call Svenson and stop your hair loss now!

WOMEN AT Svenson
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Visit http://mobileworld.globe.com.ph for a complete list of partner establishments and their perks.

FOR THE PINUP-GIRL WANNABE

FOR THE DISSATISFIED EMPLOYEE

FOR THE ETERNAL DIARIST

FOR THE PINK PRINCESS

FOR THE SERIAL PHONE-LOSER

GIFT GUIDE

FOR THE PAMPERING-DESERVING QUEEN

FOR THE GIRLY POKER MASTER

FOR THE FOOTBALL FAN

FOR THE WOMAN WHO WANTS TO STAND OUT

FOR LITTLE GIRLS WHO HAVE BEEN GOOD

FOR THE INDECISIVE FRIEND

FOR THE BUSY MANICURE LOVER

FOR THE LIP GLOSS ADDICT

FOR THE FOOT FETISHIST

FOR THE FRAGRANCE COLLECTOR

FOR THE SUDOKU WIZ

FOR THE PACQUIAO WANNABE

FOR THE PINOY AND PROUD

FOR THE INSATIABLE SHOE ADDICT

FOR THE PARTY CHRONICLER

FOR THE SPEED FREAK

FOR THE STRESS-PLAGUED

FOR THE SINGLE AND HAPPY

SONY
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Gear Up

SONY Christmas Treasures 2006
like.no.other
Promo period: November 15, 2006 to January 15, 2007
Catch our Christmas Treasures Exhibits at:

GIFT GUIDE

FOR THOSE WITH ACHES AND PAINS

The Grandpings Bibimassage Unit Pack, P990, Dreamtoys. These adorable stuffed toys are not just that. Your recipient can pop them in the microwave to take the place of his or her good old hot water bottle. Pity penguin, elephant or bear—take your pick.

FOR THE SHOWER SINGER

"Singing in the shower just got better," the packaging says. The Disco Shower Radio from Pure Inc. promises to be great—good and a whole lot of fun. P895, available at Dreamtoys. Batteries not included.

FOR THE DEDICATED SLEEPER

Instant Alarm Clock, P365, Dreamtoys. This clock is "impossible to ignore" and will wake anyone up.

FOR DRUMMING DREAMERS

Set your recipient's rhythm loose with this tabletop electric drum set, Finger Drums, P1,100, available at Dreamtoys.

FOR SECRET STASHERS

Mini Locker, P1,195, Dreamtoys.

FOR THE FRUSTRATED VOLCANOLOGIST

Your recipient can make his own exploding volcano. Violent Volcano, P795, Dreamtoys.

FOR THE BELIEVER

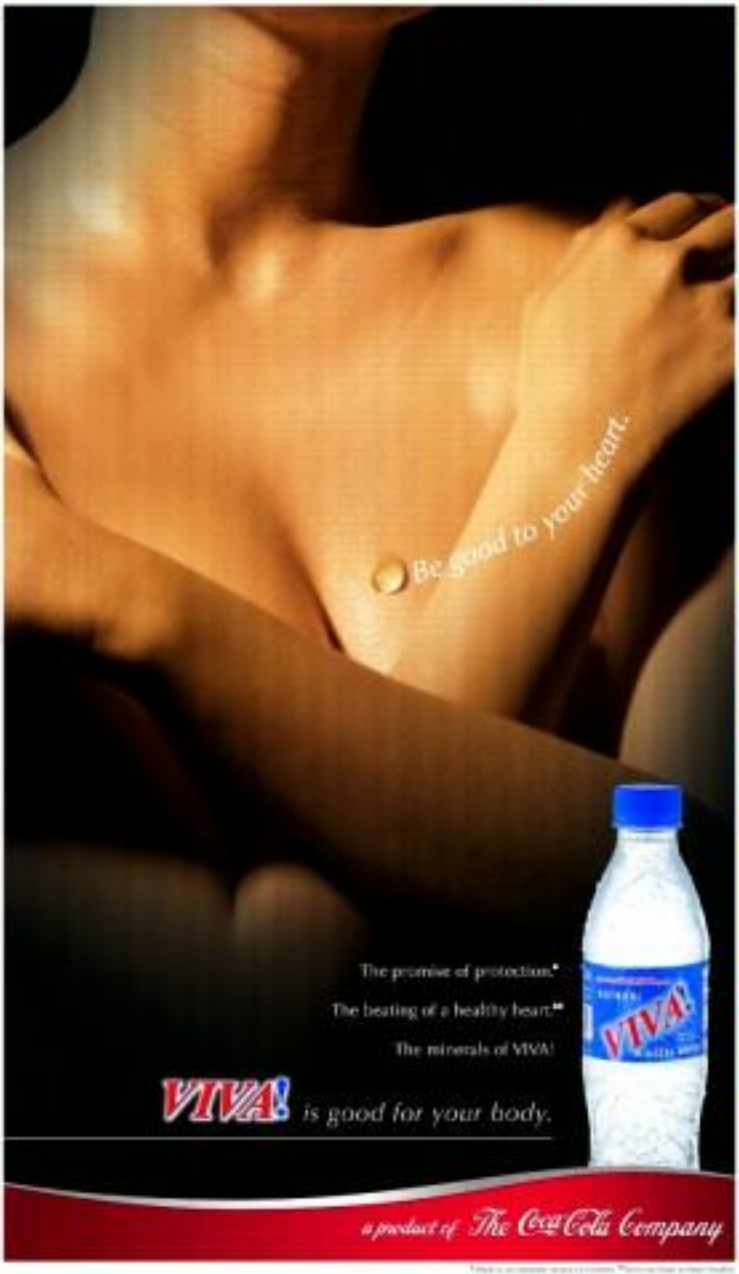
The Grand Fortune Teller, P1,295, Dreamtoys. This machine says, "Ask me any thing, I have all the answers."

FOR THE ETERNAL GOLFER

Golfer Caddy, P1,295, Dreamtoys. This set includes three golf balls, 30 wooden tees, a golf towel, a drinks bottle, a ball marker and divot mend-er (pitch).

FOR THE OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE GEEK

Computer fan, P990.



25 LIFESTYLE

Gift of tech

This Christmas, you can never go wrong with iPod and personal tech accessories

FOR THE STEVE JOBS FAN

By Gabriel H. Mercado
INQ7 Contributor

IF YOU'RE THINKING OF giving tech items this Christmas, you can do much worse than giving an iPod. And so to make sure you know what you're doing, here's a little guide on the very latest models and accessories.

So let's start with the most-awaited, the iPod touch, which Apple describes as "the best digital music player and most popular portable video player in the world."

It features up to 14 hours of battery life for music playback and up to 3.5 hours of video playback, and a full-picture, high-res 3.5-inch color display. With this you can watch home movies, photos and podcasts, or downloadable audio files you can subscribe to, in the palm of your hand.

The new iPod is available in two models: a 16GB model at the price of P16,199 and an 8GB model, which holds up to 20,000 songs or 900 hours of video, for P12,650 (all prices in this article are suggested retail prices).

It also features seamless integration with the excellent iTunes 7, the included software that has become the choice for music playback over for non-iPod users like Mac and PC users.

iPod's Clickwheel system has always been a winner for me, allowing one-hand no-brainer precise operation, not a problem to learn for most Pinoys who can text in the dark.

Another new feature is Gapless Playback, which allows for seamless playback of digital audio formats. This solves gaps that occur between music files on compressed digital audio tracks such as mp3 songs as a result of encoding design and standards.

Most users will find this negligible, but serious music fans who worry about consistency and prefer listening to albums exactly as they are rendered, such as in opera, classical music, electronic music and progressive rock recordings, will appreciate this.

BLACK screens... iPods in two colors

Scratch and Quick Scroll is another innovation that allows you to quickly find what you're looking for, while Apple's patent-pending Nike+Sync technology syncs downloads, digital music, podcasts, photos, audiobooks and movies onto the iPod and keeps them up-to-date whenever the iPod is plugged into your Mac or PC.

Nanos and the Shuffle

There are three new Nano models, namely the 2GB model in silver, available for P9,399, the 4GB model in silver, pink, green and blue for P11,699, and the new 8GB model in black priced at P13,499. Sporting a new aluminum body, it promises 24 hours of battery life, more than twice the capacity of previous models.

There also former Gapless Playback, Auto-Sync and Scratch and Quick Scroll.

Your gift recipient will also enjoy the fact there are apparently nearly 3,000 accessories available for it, including Apple's own famous headphones, armband, dock and a USB power adapter half the size of the previous one. Other third party manufacturers include Nike's Sport Kit, featuring voice-recording accessories.

The redesigned Shuffle is now the world's smallest digital music player, it is half the size of the previous model. At a mere cubic inch in volume and weighing only half an ounce, it's wrapped in stylish new aluminum design and a built-in clip. With a capacity of 1 GB, it can hold approximately 240 songs and is the most affordable model at P3,390.

The iPod Shuffle is named after Apple's shuffle feature which lets users enjoy their songs in a random order. You can, however, still control whether to songs in the order entered, such as when listening to a new album. It features up to approximately 12 hours of battery life.

SILVER Christmas with the Nano

THE IPOD Nano family

THE NEW Shuffle

BELKIN iPod Nano flip case from Belkin

Accessories

If you're looking to give accessories to an iPod, California-based Belkin Corp. is the recognized iPod accessory manufacturer.

Check out Belkin's TuneDok Stereo, a tiny P1,900 device that lets you record memos, lectures, interviews or conversations in full stereo. You can then review your CD-quality audio notes later by using your earbud headphones or computer.

It features an auxiliary 3.5-mm stereo input jack so you can record with an external microphone. With a sound the size of a credit card you can position your iPod with video toward the source and let you record it in your shirt pocket or wallet.

Belkin has several models of armbands, iPod cases and even FM tuner attachments, speaker and headphone splitters, colorful USB ports, hubs, tables and even car iPod chargers in the popular "gooseneck" form factor.

There are also fashionable leather bands in blue and pink, and an interesting bright adjustable TuneDok device that fits in your car's cup holder and secures your iPod in place while you drive.

All are quality products designed and guaranteed to make sure that you'll be getting much appreciation this Christmas, specifically from those you'll be giving an iPod to.

BELKIN car charger

BELKIN adapters

BELKIN TuneDok

Smart Buddy Ang Saya!
Sa SMART Buddy
Paskong PaBonus
may Bonus Load ka na, pwede ka pang maging Milyonaryo!
Over P60 MILLION WORTH of BONUS LOAD + P1 MILLION CASH is the Grand Draw to be given away!
Text BONUS to 8060
para makaraos kang parang noong nakaraan...
Kaya mag e-Load lang ng mag e-Load as inyong saking makakaya!
SMART TAYO

Holiday goodies

By Zoe Castro
2007 Correspondent

Spread Christmas cheer by giving your loved ones some yummy treats!

FOR TH

FOR THE MEMORY KEEPER

FOR THE PET LOVER

FOR THE WHOLE 'BARKADA'

GIFT GUIDE

FOR THE FLIP-FLOP FANATIC

BUSINESS PARTNER PROGRAM

MOTOR MO, GAMITING PANG-NEGOSYO!

FREE SEMINAR!

FOR THE WISHMAKER

E FOOD LOVER

Metropolitan

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TRAINING
STROLLING
WORKING

Be in the *middle* of the action.

Metropolitan condominium, the first residential and sports resort in one. From the athletic club to the malls, leisure areas and Makati CBD, you're set to live on-the-go. Experience Skyloft living the Metropolitan style with impeccably designed living areas overlooking the best side of Makati. So be where the action is all around you. Be at the Metropolitan.

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Email us at sales@philtown.net
Visit our website at www.philtown.net

PHILTOWN
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Beyond Condos, Landmarks.

Share an evening to remember in Timeless Classics featuring the legendary Matt Monro, Jr. on December 7, 6:30 pm. For Invites call 638-1985.
Present this portion during the event to avail of a special discount!

sun

Triple 3 Treats

sun CELLULAR PREPAID

Prize Overload

Lots of prizes for each member up for grabs weekly.

Pwede pang manalo ng P1 million pesos each, TAX FREE!

Bumuo lang ng group of 3. The more you load, mas maraming discounts at mas marami ding chances of winning!

Form a group of 3 and register within 15 days. Only 1 person out of 3 needs to register, the other 2 simply have to join. Ping mobile join me sang 3rd member, officially registered na ang group! May 30% discount na kayo sa Unlimited Services and Text Calls. At every raffle entries pang maximize sa with every load. When the group reaches a total load top-up of P150 within 30 days, each member gets 30% discount on all Unlimited Services and Text Calls purchases the following month.

How to start a group:

Text "BIG<space>first name/last name/address" and send to 333.
Ex. "BIG Maria Manuel/1996 Blue Gardenia Cooperative Center" send to 333

Sun will reply and assign a group name na pwedeng ipambida sa mga friends na gustong mag-join.

Sun partners and flyers for details on purchasing discounted load.

How to join a group:

Text "JOIN<space>group name/first name/last name/address" and send to 333.
Ex. "Join manMVP3 Z3456/Maria/Manuel/Blue Gardenia Drive, Makati" send to 333

Group members must use the assigned name na pinadala ng Sun Cellular sa 3 group members.

How to join the RAFFLE:

Simply load any of the following Sun Cellular prepaid product's para makakuha ng electronic raffle entries:

1. Physical regular load
2. Physical unlimited call entry
3. Physical special load
4. Reseller vouchers
5. Xpress Load regular reload
6. Xpress Load unlimited reload
7. Digital Station reload
8. SIM call card

Raffle entry accumulation table:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF RAFFLE ENTRIES
Load P1.00 (anything)	1
Any group load of P1 (Reseller & Any)	10
1st consecutive month group load of P150 within 30 days	20
2nd consecutive month group load of P150 within 30 days	30

For more info, call the Sun Hotline 395-8000 or visit www.sunCellular.com.ph. See posters and flyers for more details. Promo period: Mar. 22, 2006 to Jun. 30, 2006

Prizes:

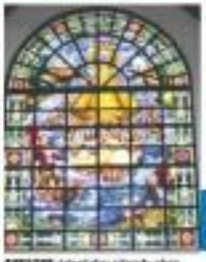
WEEKLY PRIZE	QTY	PER WEEK WINNERS	DRAW DATE
Hatchback 1.5 GLX 4-door Automatic	1	1	Weekly
Sedan 1.6 V 4-door Automatic	1	1	Weekly
Sedan 1.6 V Sport Automatic	1	1	Weekly
MAJOR ITEM	**QTY**	**QTY PER WINNER**	**DRAW DATE**
iPod Nano 1G	4	1	Nov. 15
Philips DVD Player DVP 3960	4	1	Nov. 15
iPod Nano 4G	4	1	Nov. 30
Canon PowerShot A 630 Digital Camera	4	1	Dec. 1
Sony Ericsson W790 i Walkman	4	1	Dec. 1
Sony Ericsson W900 Sculptures	4	1	Dec. 15
Canon Mini DV Camcorder (Blue) DC	4	1	Dec. 30
DVD Home Cinema 5.1 CH	4	1	Jan. 1
Samsung LCD 19" wide screen TV	4	1	Jan. 1
Samsung LCD 40" w/ Home Theater System	1	1	Jan. 15
Mitsubishi 50" LCD	1	1	Jan. 30
4" Mitsubishi	1	1	Jan. 30

10% tax for prize exceeding P 10,000.00 shall be shouldered by Digital Mobile Philippines, Inc.

Prize shown may vary from actual item.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LIFE

THE CHURCH where the image of the Virgin comes from at the start of the Traslacion



AWESOME stained glass artworks adorn many churches in Bicol.

I am not much into religious celebrations, but the Peñafrancia Festival in Naga was a moving experience for me

Going the extra mile for Our Lady

Text and photos by Nina Mari M. Salinas
INQ7 Correspondent

FILIPINOS ARE A RELIGIOUS people. We go to church and hear Mass every Sunday. Our homes have an altar full of several statues of saints that we bring santapaguita garlands to every night. We pray the rosary. We do the novena. And we have grand fiestas in honor of religious figures.

I haven't attended that many fiestas but those that I had attended were all about pro-cession and, of course, a lot of eating.

When I went to Bicol to witness the Infrascata festival, however, I did not only see how extremely religious and fanatical we could be as a people, I also experienced a very memorable and moving fiesta that changed how I look at these religious feasts.

Of course, the eating part was pretty memorable, too.

Camarines Sur is still the pilgrimage center of Bicol because of the Peñafrancia Festival, which is held there every September in honor of the region's patroness, Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

Just what happens during the fiesta? The image of the Virgin is carried by foot on a solemn procession called the Traslacion from the shrine to the cathedral, and then the image is crowned in the Plaza through a floral procession on the Friday of the Novena.

Literally thousands of devotees, pilgrims, tourists and visitors troop to this cathedral and along the banks of the river to watch the procession. Naga City is where the bicycle of all the celebration is because the Basilica Minore that houses the image of the Virgin Mary is located there.

I had the honor of experiencing both the Traslacion and the Plaza procession.

Outside the church, the heat of the scorching sun was merciless, but no one complained about the heat, or the crowd, the stench of sweat. (Stampe me, of course.) Instead, everyone patiently waited for Ina while chanting "Ina" and "Viva la Virgen." Men in uniform were also stationed everywhere to make sure that the crowd of usually emotional devotees were under control.

When the float carrying the image of Ina

MEDALLIONS and trinkets and other religious items on sale during the Peñafrancia festival

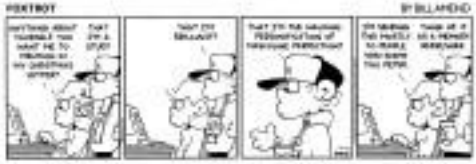
COLORFUL headbands with messages like "Viva La Virgen" are sold outside churches for Pi 5 each.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

COMICRelief

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2006

FOOTBOT — BY BILLAMENDO



A LITPK — BY EDI ABRERA

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY — BY Pol. Jr. ACOSTA

NUTS — BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

LOVEBOOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

ATOMO AND WEBOY — BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PANALIGAN

BIRD MACHINE — BY MANNY ABRERA

HEADBANGERS — BY JORGE TIQUIO

TULOOK — BY NAPILANG TATUM HILAMBUSING

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Philip J. Anderson
Hayward, CA

13806

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

				5	7	1		
7				3		2		
9	2	5						
		4						7
8	9	7				6	3	1
3						4		
						7	6	3
		6		8				5
		3	4	6				

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	2	7	4	8	6	3	5	9
3	9	8	1	2	5	6	4	7
5	6	4	9	7	3	8	2	1
6	7	2	3	5	4	9	1	8
9	8	5	2	1	8	7	3	4
4	1	3	7	9	8	2	6	5
8	5	9	6	3	1	4	7	2
2	3	6	8	4	7	5	9	6
7	4	1	5	6	2	5	9	3

Win a 'barkada' trip from Jack n' Jill!

WINNER Mariella Kyla Ortigas and Zara Ferrajolie

DREAMING OF A LOCAL "LOMEO" Pinoy adventure with your best mates? Lemeon-eating young Pinoys, take note: If you're saving up for that 'next' grand barkada vacation, the road to paradise may just be a click and/or a mail away.

Capture your gang's best barkada moments and get the chance to win plane tickets to Boracay, Bohol and other Philippine dream destinations, as well as other great prizes.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, Jack n' Jill ties up with 2BU for a special photo competition, the winner of which will get to take his or her barkada on a memorable trip.

All it takes is a photo of you and your gang having a good time with Jack n' Jill products. Include a photo caption and a short story on how Jack n' Jill products have become a part of your barkada's life.

The photos must be taken with any of the following: Chippy, Potato Chips, Tarpetos, Spuds, Star Pops, Decoretos, Mani, Marbled Crack, Mille Bocks, Rosy Roses, 3D Chocolate Shake Candy and Magic Flakes.

When sending the entries, include the sender's name, school or company address, age, e-mail address, contact number (landline and cellular) and the names of friends in the photo. E-mail jacknjill@bluecircle@gmail.com.

One weekly winner will be drawn until Dec. 31, and they will receive Jack n' Jill loot bags for their whole barkada. Star Cellular will also reward two runners-up with T200 phones with P1,000 worth of Star Cellular Easy Load.

For the grand prize, which shall be drawn on the last week of December, the makers of the best photo of his friends will win their round-trip tickets to any local destination, courtesy of Cebu Pacific.

When are you wanting for? Bring your camera to the next inexcellent, excellent road trip to gimmick night and snap away. Your grandest group adventure awaits!

This week's winners: Mona Mendoza, Bida Ortigas and Zara Ferrajolie.

"My girlfriends—who are also my officemates—love to hang out during our breaks. We always munch on Jack 'n Jill which we always keep a stash of in our drawers! Or sometimes we go to the Mini Stop near by so we can buy our Jack 'n Jill fix. In between munchies of Chippy or Potato Chips or Star Cords, we talk about work, fashion, movies and our ex-boyfriends. Hanging out with such cohorts is much, much more fun with Jack 'n Jill!"

2BU! TO THE RESCUE
What do you need?

2BU!'S NEW SECTION PROMISES TO FIND the answers and turn your desires into reality.

Last week, we asked you to e-mail us about your troubles—and, wham, your e-mail came.

Our inbox is starting to get flooded—and we like it that way.

We've already created varying dreams into reality, but we can't wait to do more.

What do you need?

Look inside yourself, search your soul and tell us—what do you desire?

Do you want a surprise birthday party for your hardworking father? Are you worried that you won't be able to find a beautiful prom dress? Do you want to send a gift to your dorm sidekick? Are your shoes falling apart? Do you want a Christmas feast for your beloved yaya's family? Do you need books for school? Is there a celebrity you really want to meet?

What do you need? Nothing is too big or small.

Tell us—and we might just find the answers and turn your desires into reality.

E-mail 2bu@inquirer.com.ph

Dance. . . to save our forests

YOGA MANILA PRESENTS THE PHILIPPINES' first-ever Yoga Trance Dance workshop led by Tessa Hermes, an award-winning teacher based in Venice, California, Dec. 7, 7 p.m., at the penthouse of Century Plaza, 1326 Boni Av., Jacquard Village, Mabini, City. Part of the proceeds will be donated to Protect the Philippines, an organization that spearheads tree-planting projects in the Philippines and the world.

Trance Dance is an exploration of movement through yoga, dance, and music to encourage self-expression and discovery by tapping into your whole inner self.

This free form of yoga was developed by the world-renowned yogini in the Mata Rita.

Workshop fee is P700 per person. Limited slots available. Call or text Yoga Manila at 0917 5329054 or e-mail yogamanila@gmail.com.

Choose the best and the worst

AMONG LAST YEAR'S 200 winners were the PEP Fantasmins, Kath, Bea, Regine, Ronnie, Piolo, Sharon Cuneta, Judy Ann Santos, Dingdong Dantes, Anjanette Abayari, Dolphy, "Darna" and the Chocolate Factory" and Gwen Stefani.

Who will be the big winners of 2006?

We want you to be the judge again. Tell us who you think deserve to be hailed the best and worst of 2006 under the following categories:

Music: band, song, singer (solo, duet), album, video, concert, album cover

Film: movie, screenwriter, actor, actress

Fashion: male model, female model, fashion designer, brand, shop (mall, accessory, fashion line)

Health and beauty: beauty product, aesthetic clinic/style, fitness regimen

Literature: book, author, magazine

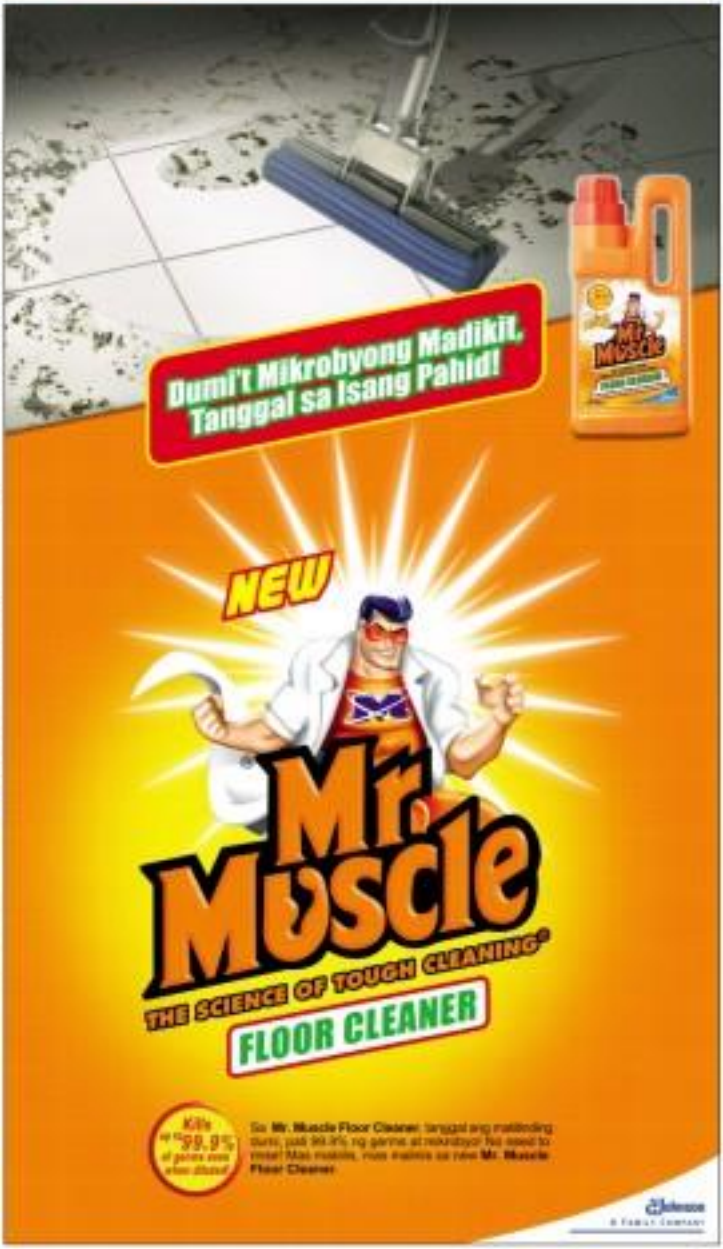
Food: restaurant, dish, fast food

Sports: athlete, MVP, team, PCSA team

Television: commercial, channel, TV show, TV actor, TV actress, game show, talk show

Technology: website, blog, gadget, game

Send your answers to 2bu@inquirer.com.ph or 2BU! c/o Features Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Diary Room Art, 2nd Floor, 20 Sheridan St., Mandaluyong City. Please write your complete name, address and contact number. Base your answers on the 20 shows



Going the extra mile for Our Lady

From page B1

DEVOTEES of all ages swayed in a circumstance parade contest.

left the church, everyone went wild chasing the image, wanting to touch it.

Imagine a lot of people crying, shouting and clapping all at the same time—because of the Virgin Mary. It was a truly sacred experience for me.

The floral procession, however, was too taxing for the sister I wasn't able to witness it. The truck bus was jampacked and I couldn't squeeze in even for a quick peek. However, seeing Mindanao running in the streets or jumping on top of cars and jeeps just to catch a glimpse of the Ina's image amazed me. The things that Clare devotees do!

At the end of the day, out of breath, drenched in sweat and full of complaints, I realized how I was nothing compared to these Marian-faithful who toiled and would devote nothing for the Virgin Mary.

But then, another realization: For an agnostic like me, I, too, had gone the extra mile.

E-mail the author at mariballon_ph@yahoo.com

Bottoms up

By Walter Ang
Lifestyle Contributor

IN HIS BOOK "THE METROsexual Guide to Style," Michael Flocker concisely articulates a great way of looking at libations: Beer is easily consumed, fun to indulge in and comes in a variety of brands. There are light beers, dark beers, cheap beers and top-of-the-line beers.

Wine is more complex and is more of an acquired taste. Imbued by vapor and produced with a much greater attention to detail, wines are multifaceted and contain subtleties and characteristics that are not always immediately recognizable. Of course, there are also cheap wines.

That being said, he also provides a great analogy for both, likening beer to cassettes and wine to films.

If that's the case, then the recent wine festival, "Feast 2006: The Art of Winemaking," was a veritable Metro Manila Filmfest for wine lovers.

Organized by Winelegist, the festival featured booths of the different labels and wineries that it carries. Taking over the Rockwell Tent, the festival gathered wine aficionados despite the balmy weather. Attendees got to taste all the wine they could while chatting up representatives of different wineries.

Now, wine is one of those things that many Pilipino wanders might only have a fleeting encounter with. The occasional wedding reception, a birthday party here and there, or a fancy date when you're out to impress or be impressed. After all, it's so much easier to order a keg of beer if you're out with friends, or to get your hunt on cocktails.

However, upping our something now and gaining a better appreciation for or perspective of it is always a good thing. What it comes to food and drink, there's no other way to learn than to literally take it in.

Here's a wine crash course just in time for Christmas

Trying it out

For wines, you can, of course, read up a little bit before you buy a bottle or two. You can try out your selections at home with family and friends. Heat very, you can make faces and be as loud as you want with your comments. Or, the good stick is to buy two kinds of wine or you can compare. The total time, get a new one to compare with the one you liked.

When it comes to red wine, the usual kinds are cabernet, shiraz, merlot, shiraz, pinot noir and zinfandel. The last two are considered more "light and sweet" and are a good first step for those who want to begin exploring the universe of wines.

In one of the wine tasting classes at the festival, Angus Lilley of Stonnington Winery (based in Sonoma County California) shared copious notes and insights on the different zinfandels, namely Big River, Barricia, Bellbent, Dickerson and Tchivalric.

Lilley explained that where a wine is made greatly influences the way it tastes. Apparently, Californian has diverse terroir growing conditions, such as running soils and climates, that confer different grape characters. The way a wine is made also influences the outcome. How a wine is aged—in French oak barrels, for example—and how long it is aged also create different varieties of wine. Thus, a wide variety of zinfandels.

The possible combinations and permutations have given birth to Sommelier's classification of zinfandels: Mercurial Delightful, Joyful and Tasted predilection, County Lovers Or Mood of modern and classic wine-making techniques, and Winery Blend Better. Points for everyday drinking's the Lilley sweetest and espoused the differences of the Dry Declared labels, the class attendees gestures and experienced a taste of each.

Mini tasting sessions

The good news is that wine festivals aren't the only time when wine tastings are held. In the three WineDepot showrooms in Makati, Pasig and Mahang, a nominal fee of P150 lets one have a mini wine-tasting session of his own. Advice on what kinds of wine you might like come courtesy of the staff.

"Our staff are well trained to answer any question. We even send them abroad to the different wineries for training," shared Hazel Ramos of WineDepot. "All the wines we carry also have easy-to-read identity cards that note the taste, let's say sweet or spicy as well as what kinds of food can be best paired with a particular wine. This makes it a lot easier for customers to narrow down their choices."

In their efforts to make wine more accessible to a wider audience, WineDepot has a text message service for updates on featured labels, as well as a website, www.winedepot.com.ph, which offers online shopping, information on highlighted selections, current promos and a newsletter to boot. Yes, a primer launch pad for further adventures with wine.

Call WineDepot at 8810000.

ENTERTAINMENT

Edna Ermie G. Velarde

OPENING TODAY

Reyna

Stars Eddie Garcia, Paolo Contis, Melanie Marquez, Eugene Domingo, Keanna Reeves

Directed by Gerry Tapucio

Always a basic, a dependable female contestant (Reeves) pretends to be a drag queen and joins a gay pageant in a last-ditch effort to bring home the crown. To fulfill the dying wish of her late mom (Marquez) who's a barangay beauty queen, the poor girl asks the help of three gay mentors and an aunt who works as a waiter in a salon (Domingo). Think of a reverse makeover à la "Queer Eye for the straight Girl," the inventive Kay Rivadal, who developed the concept with Ed Santiago and Gil Sampaden, insists that she steered clear of the "Queer" principles and "added unique Pinoy touches to the story." In turn, "it's always our obsession with beauty — that makes it a romantic film that everyone—gay or straight, male or female—can relate to," Rivadal noted.

A Good Year

Stars Russell Crowe, Albert Finney, Freddie Highmore, Marion Cotillard

Directed by Ridley Scott

Based on Peter Mayle's 2004 bestseller, this European romp finds an unlikely hero in a commercially hard-working London investment banker (Crowe) who is dragged kicking and screaming to a holiday retreat when he inherits his "first-quizzed" uncle's (Finney's) vineyard. "[Crowe is] still at that Paul Schiffgeister says] "[It's light, airy, easygoing, idyllic and rather goofy" Richard Corliss of Time dismisses it as " 'Cars' without the animation ... Crowe surprises by feeling." John Hurt of Newsweek concurs: "[It's] a deeply artificial adaptation ... There's a faux quality [to it] ... so if this Christmas's imagined themselves as taking a vacation while they were shooting it."

The Nativity Story

Stars Keisha Castle-Hughes, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Ciaran Hinds, Oscar Isaac

Directed by Catherine Hardwicke

The story of Jesus Christ's humanitarian Conception and birth is recold by Hardwicke who expectedly embarked on a quest "to make the

ORDERING IN

Rita copes with son's death

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

LITTLE ELIA JESU has passed on into [illegible] weeks after he was born to his ecstatic parents, actress Rita Avila and TV director Erick Reyes.

Rita and Erick consider their "miracle baby" an angel.

Elia Jesu (pronounced Eliheya Yesu) had been born with a "complex" heart condition. She succumbed this in a text message to Inquirer Entertainment.

"It's [an] official! his lungs," she said. "He [had a 10/Bleed] time breathing."

Rita added that she has taken consolation in the thought that her baby is no longer in pain. "[Instead] he is feeling pure joy and is in perfect health [in heaven]."

Still, said the grieving mom, "I miss him terribly" Her resolve is to focus on the positive. "He left us with great memories to remember."

Miscarriage

Rita started fervently praying for a child after she suffered a miscarriage last year.

She recalled that, on the night before she found out she was pregnant, she had asked for a sign. "When I opened 'Our Daily Bread' [book] the following morning, the quote for the day was from Luke 1:37: 'You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name Jesus.' That's why we named him Jesu. Lucia, he is one."

Unknown to Rita, Erick had already set aside a sign on the same night. "When he opened his e-mail the next day, cherubs appeared everywhere."

Prayer

On Nov. 14, Rita gave birth to the 5.5-lb. Jesu. On Dec. 2, he [illegible].

The actress recalled that, before she was pregnant, she usually sang "Ama Namin (The Lord's Prayer)" in her baby-sway day. After giving birth, she would sing the prayer to him and he seemed to recognize it, she said. "He would move his eyes from side to side before falling asleep."

In spite of everything, Rita said, she is thankful. "I am grateful for having been a mom for three weeks ... for my wonderful husband and the selflessness of our relatives and friends who were in through all of this."

Jesu was christened on Sunday morning. An afternoon Mass followed at the crypt of Christ the King in Green Meadows.

Rita told the priest assured them: "We don't pray for Jesu, but to have his intercede for us. We now have an angel in heaven."

JESU'S birth was long awaited, his stay brief. "I miss him terribly," says Rita. "But he left us with happy memories."

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–His Eminence Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales

OPENS TODAY

CHEER FACTOR

Peace, love, tax write-off

ROTTEL, New York...Wanted: tie-dyed shirts, sequiners and other artifacts from the August 1969 Woodstock music festival, a high-winter mark of that decade. The Rolled Woods Center for the Arts wants them for a museum honoring the '60s. A 4,000-seat concert pavilion at the former farm 120 km northwest of New York City opened this summer. Donations will be accepted until Dec. 14. AP

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AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 REYNA	2 THE NATIVITY	3 HAPPY FEET	4 MANO VIVA			
G4	1 HAPPY FEET	2 ALL THE KING'S MEN	3 A GOOD YEAR				
	4 BORAT	5 THE RETURN	6 THE NATIVITY	7 CASINO ROYALE			
GB1	1 HAPPY FEET	2 THE NATIVITY					
GB3	1 HAPPY FEET	2 THE NATIVITY					
	3 ALL THE KING'S MEN	4 A GOOD YEAR	5 CASINO ROYALE				
ATC	1 THE NATIVITY	2 A GOOD YEAR					
	3 HAPPY FEET	4 DECK THE HALLS	5 CASINO ROYALE				
ACC	1 THE NATIVITY	2 HAPPY FEET	3 THE MARINE	4 REYNA			
M2	1 REYNA	2 THE NATIVITY					
	3 A GOOD YEAR	4 HAPPY FEET	5 MANO VIVA				

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RUSHES

PAUL McCARTNEY

Ex-Beatle seeks help

LONDON—FORMER Beatle Paul McCartney has more a rocky summer. Ex- help since the breakup of his marriage in May, he said Friday.

McCartney, 64, said Heather Mills McCartney, 38, announced their separation on May after four years of marriage and began divorce proceedings in July. They have a 3-year-old daughter, Beatrice.

In an interview with Britain's Radio Times magazine, McCartney said he had sought solace in writing music, but had been helped by professional psychiatric counseling.

"It's not a bad idea to have someone to talk to," McCartney said. AP

To the end

LOS ANGELES— Jennifer Lopez's first husband, Ojani Noa, said a judge that he plans to fight her efforts to speak a still-secret name.

Noa, 31, said Friday in a pretrial hearing that he expects agreeing to a June 30 pre-hearing stipulation that prohibits him from "soliciting, designating, casting, in a negative light or otherwise disparaging or casting disparagement" to Lopez.

"I want to fight this thing to the end," he said. "My life has not been the same since this lawsuit was filed."

The judge gave Noa until Jan. 17 to hire a lawyer or represent himself.

Lopez filed her lawsuit April 10 and obtained a temporary restraining order barring Noa from publishing intimate details of their sex life.

Noa said Friday that Lopez misunderstood what the book was about.

"This was to be about my life story, coming here from Cuba," he said. "She was only a part of my life." AP

Alcoholic

NEW YORK— Lindsay Lohan has been attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, her publicist said this day.

"She started attending soon, and I think it's a positive thing," Leslie Glazer told The Associated Press. "My biggest fear is what is she big, Kim to 'out' which [Lohan] did' gesture."

She said Lohan, 20, made the decision on her own to attend meetings, although Glazer added, "And I'm the one, that's not for me, the Trump think, my insurance."

"It's a place to go and feel safe," she said. "No one judges her, and it's going to be a great opening. But, to me, the fact that don't seeing that there's something not right makes her smarter than the rest person." AP

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GALLERIA

1 CASINO ROYALE - THE	6 KAMA SUTRA 3
2 REYNA	7 BORAT
3 HAPPY FEET	8 THE RETURN
4 A GOOD YEAR	9 FRAGILE
5 THE NATIVITY STORY	10 DECK THE HALLS

ERMITA

1 THE NATIVITY STORY	
2 REYNA	5 A GOOD YEAR
3 THE RETURN	6 HAPPY FEET
4 KAMA SUTRA 3	7 CASINO ROYALE

METRO EAST

1 THE NATIVITY STORY	5 HAPPY FEET
2 KAMA SUTRA 3	6 CASINO ROYALE
3 REYNA	7 THE RETURN
4 A GOOD YEAR	8 DECK THE HALLS

NOVALICHES

1 KAMA SUTRA 3	3 REYNA
2 A GOOD YEAR	4 HAPPY FEET

CITISQUARE MALABON — PIONEER

1 REYNA	1 THE NATIVITY STORY
2 WANG YAYA	2 KAMA SUTRA 3
3 RESERVE	3 A GOOD YEAR
4 RESERVE	4 HAPPY FEET

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CINEMAS

STA. ROSA — LIPA

1 REYNA	1 BORAT
2 THE MARINE	2 SANTA CLAUSE 3
3 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE	3 REYNA
4 FRAGILE	4 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

DASMARINAS — ANGELES

1 REYNA	1 REYNA
2 DECK THE HALLS	2 KALELOO
3 PEARL	3 BORAT
4 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH	4 FRAGILE

IMUS — STARMILLS

1 REYNA	1 REYNA
2 A GOOD YEAR	2 KALELOO
3 CASINO ROYALE	3 BORAT
4 HAPPY FEET	4 HAPPY FEET
	5 SANTA CLAUSE 3
	6 CASINO ROYALE

BACOLOD — ILOILO

1 CASINO ROYALE	1 REYNA
2 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE	2 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE
3 SANTA CLAUSE 3	3 SANTA CLAUSE 3
4 BOA	4 THE NATIVITY STORY
5 HAPPY FEET	5 HAPPY FEET
6 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH	

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Annie Awards nominees

LOS ANGELES—DREAMWORKS ANIMATION SKG Inc. led the pack in this year's Annie Awards nominations for film, television and home video animation, garnering 17 nods for two features, "Shaded Away" and "Over the Hedge."

The Disney-Pixar film "Cars," a nostalgia and tie-in romp featuring anthropomorphic vehicles, received 16 nominations, including those for directing, writing, voice acting and music.

The other nominees for top animated feature were "Happy Feet," from Warner Bros., a division of Time Warner Inc., "Monster House," from Sony Pictures, a division of Sony Corp., and "Open Season," also from Sony Pictures.

The winner of the Annie awards has gone on to claim the Oscar for animated feature every year since the Academy Award for animation was created.

Nominated for Best Animated Television Production were "Charlie and Lola," "Peanuts Gang for Imaginary Friends," "Grey of the Hill," "The Wacky Delibertots," and "Short Term Parking."

Oscar peg

Nominations for "Cars," from Pixar Animation Studios and The Walt Disney Co., included Best Animated Feature and Best Director for John Lasseter, director of the landmark Pixar film "Toy Story."

Composer Randy Newman also received nominations for the film's soundtrack.

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Did You Know...

NEW YORK—George Clooney on "brutal night" out drinking with Danny DeVito: "I got to the point where I was dumping the shots into, uh, you know, a plant next to me and ... I don't think Danny was me do that."

AP

Opening Today

From page F1

story as close to its biblical origin as possible ... (seeking) the help of historians and theologians." Rick Lyman of The Hollywood Reporter describes it "as the first overt, artistically and spiritually satisfying film to emerge" from the Hollywood trend of aiming biblical stories for material. Bill Muller of The Arizona Republic opines that "as a religious film, (it) occupies comfortable territory as a rather epic but low-budget ... It's an anti-Passion," a movie that makes a statement against violence rather than espousing it." A.O. Scott of New York Times comments that "it sticks to the familiar details of the narrative and dramatizes them with serenity and good taste." Steve Founder of Village Voice thinks it's a "soapbox retelling."

An Inconvenient Truth

Featuring Al Gore
Directed by Davis Guggenheim

A hit in the Sundance film fest, this documentary "offers a passionate and inspiring look at Gore's commitment to expose information that has surpassed that surrounded global warming ... the biggest moral challenge facing our civilization." David Denby of New Yorker says: "The science is detailed, deep-layered, vivid and terrifying. Every school, college and church group ... should see this movie." Adam Alter of Premiere agrees: "[It] succeeds in cutting through the clutter ... by making a clear, compelling case for how our actions are affecting the planet." Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times puts it succinctly: "You owe it to yourself to see this film." Intrinsically is SM Cinemas.

Kama Sutra 3: Love Potion

Stars Nicholas Irons, Tamsin Outhwaite, James Fleming
Directed by Jag Mundhra

An affluent couple (Irons and Outhwaite) invite an accident and the wife gets paralyzed. To save their marriage, they fly to Incida, India, so that the wife can avail of Ayurvedic treatments. She, however, ends up sanctioned and her philandering husband becomes the prime suspect. Mundhra's erotic thriller is the last known film (?) seen by the director this in the Hitch DAC Film Festival, held by the Indo-American Arts Council, in New York City last month. Dailymotion of the 10-entry "Sanctuaries" calls this film her "worst yet." The "positively useless," says the Sunday Mirror. She co-stars with fellow Brit Penelope, who starred in "Look, Think and Two Thinking Barrels."

ENTERTAINMENT

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box-office for the three-day weekend beginning Dec. 1

Happy Feet – Warner Brothers

TW	LW	Title	Gross	Wks
1	1	Happy Feet	$17.2 mln	2
2	2	Casino Royale	$16.1 mln	3
3	3	Dreamgirls	$11.2 mln	2
4	–	The Holiday	$8.5 mln	1
5	4	Deck the Halls	$6.7 mln	2
6	6	The Santa Clause 3	$5.5 mln	5
7	5	Borat	$4.8 mln	6
8	–	Children	$3.5 mln	1
9	8	Stranger Than Fiction	$3.4 mln	4
10	–	Last Winter, The Pride of Taj	$2.3 mln	1

This Week: Last Week: Movies in Release: New release

Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

REUTERS

ROUNDUP

'Maahleeta' in France

Guillaume Mendelson's "Maahleeta (The Rheumer)" has been released on video in France and French-speaking territories in Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Switzerland.

The deal with French distributor Swift Distribution was closed at the Toronto International Film Festival last year.

The film will be available in Germany and other German-speaking territories early next year, with Subtitles in the German release.

It will also be released theatrically in the US next year by Picture This Entertainment.

Film fest bust

The Manila Broadcasting Company's "Guess The Box" raffle promo makes listeners of all DBC radio stations to grasp the 2006 Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines (MMFFP) Best Picture winner for a chance to win P10,000 in cash.

Either from the typewritten and mint-coupon the answers, names, address, age, contact number, signature and proof of purchase of any of the following: two empty sachets of any Lactum drink group (UG, G2 or T2 grams) or three sachets of any walnut or one bottle any size of Hemme shampoo.

Entries should be placed in a white, legal-sized envelope.

Drop boxes are located at dzBB, 102.3 fm FM or 99.7 Love Radio, MBC Bldg. Sen. Gil J. Puyat Ave. Corner Buendia St., Makati City; Pearl Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Post-dated entries will be dropped at any remote DBC station.

Deadline for dropping of entries for weekly drawn is every Friday until 12 p.m. of Dec. 29. For the grand draw, deadline is on Dec. 29, 5 p.m.

'Pusang Gala' uncut

"Mga Pusang Gala," top prize five-feature winner at the San Francisco Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender Film Festival, is now available on videocassette.

Directed and produced by Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, with screenplay by Jose Lacaba and Rody Vera, it is based on Lacaba's Palanca award-winning play and stars Ricky Davao, Irma Adlawan, Maggie Cadley, Lauren Reeves and Mikaela Cabrera.

Garrison injured

BEVERLY HILLS, California – A racer-turned-valley-ski carrying Lana Garrison of TV's "Prison Break" and three teenagers struck a tree, killing a 17-year-old boy, police said.

Two 15-year-old girls inside the vehicle were also injured, one critically, during the late Saturday night accident, police said. Garrison, 36, had minor injuries.

The vehicle jumped a curb and hit a tree. Authorities were trying to determine who drove the SUV, which was registered to Garrison. AP

Marry a Filipina, Matt told son

By Pradnya Cartagenian
Contributor

IN 1964, ROSE MATTSON MORRO PHD hears, his father was a top international ace. A succession of hits—beginning with "Portrait of My Love" (1960), "Softly As I Leave You" (1962), "From Russia With Love" (1963), a cover of "Yesterday" (1965), and "Rock Fever" (1966), among many others...but made Matt Sr. as famous as Frank Sinatra. In fact, he was being inducted in at "The British Beatles."

When he died of liver cancer in 1985, his first son, now called Matt Morro Jr., accidentally stepped into his shoes.

Eighteen years since a career that thrives on the legacy of his father, Matt Morro Jr. met the local press on Monday at the new Space Sunland Cafe in Manila, to promote his forthcoming gig, "Matt Sings Matt: One Story, A Thousand Memories."

Did you mean to follow in your dad's

LIKE FATHER. Matt Morro Jr. sings like dad's hits.

And then there were three

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Danny DeVito Matthew Broderick
Deck the Halls
NOW SHOWING

OPENS TODAY!
DISCOVER THE SECRETS FROM THE ANCIENT BOOK OF LOVE
KAMA SUTRA 3
Love Potion

AFTER A NUMBER OF EXCITING, stressful and/or frustrating months, "Philippines Idol" has whittled down its surviving finalists to the final three who will sing and sing it out for the first Pinoy Idol winner this Dec. 9 and 10 at the Araneta Coliseum.

The "pressfinalists" survivors are Gian Magdangal, Jan Nieto and Rina Navarro—not necessarily in that order of potential victory. Throughout the extended competition, there's always been an ill's guesswork situation, especially when it comes to elaborated guesses.

That's because the ill's terribly realistic contestants appear to be dominated four-and-a-saying one-and-a-half by contestants of strong role-possessing "machismo," "excitable juggernauts that can roll over the competition with the subtlety of a construction.

But even strong machismo in any show, as shelter-lace filmmaker John Sayles once memorably put it, the Miguel Mendoza (Gian) joined the 80's into ours.

Since he won the youngest finalist (at only 17), Miguel was gifted for idea the sweet talent, and some people believed that it was purely the votes he garnered that kept him in the running.

This was doomed until he sang it some, but that's how the show's cookie crumbled, so they just had to accept it.

With only three finalists left, then "Philippines Idol" sets have the cream of the crop? Alas, no. With five Gians also addicted, the show lost one of its two best.

So, who among Gian, Jan and Mau will come off most strongly in the Araneta Coliseum "final-finale"?

Jan has improved a lot and is now a certified singing hunk, but he's still a bit lightweight in the interpretation and emotion department, so who knows?

On the other hand, Gian consistent wow-ed and over-impressed, having performed in long or-than-life stage musicals. In fact, the show's jurors have unanimously advised him to go more intimate and "mainstream" and that he tone more "accessible" to the general audience. But if he pays it up more, will he lose his unique edge? Decisions, decisions ...

As for Mau, she looks more interesting now that she did at the start of the idol's final round, so she should thank all the ... who have joined up her cheering ... hairstyles and ... styles.

On the other hand, she's ... gained up two pinch, and ... limo-esque access as a ... extra—and, worse, as a ... singer—so, as much as ... stylists, who have been ... unusual with her mouth ... Well, what's easy to ... go at Academy? It's time ... look on the dirty looks ... mind. On public that ... wrong singer first, and ... petitioners only second.

Finally, my crystal-ball ... how the idol will ... out? One guess may only ... good as yours, but we think ... has the advantage. Well, ... her, 9 and 10 finals, we'll ... be sure if psychic guesswork ... us stars.

In any case, despite the ... that we've tossed our ... "acquired" guesses in the ... we won't spit out the pits ... not!

May the best and most ... ing Philippine Idol emerge ... Araneta Coliseum after ... it supposed to be about!

Vatican gives '*thumbs up*' for "The Nativity Story"

Vatican officials have given the latest Hollywood re-enactment of the Gospel accounts of Jesus birth a "thumbs up" after hosting the world premiere Nov. 20.

"THE NATIVITY STORY is the first film to ... screened at the Vatican.

Thunderous applause broke out several times during the film's ... screening, with the most enthusiastic being during the scene of Christ's birth in Bethlehem.

Praise for "The Nativity Story, came from the ... Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, ... the Vatican's powerful secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone; ... the head of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, U.S. Archbishop John P. Foley.

"It's well done ... a great cinematic event", Cardinal Bertone told journalists after seeing the film in the Vatican's Paul VI hall together with more than 3,000 VIP's, invited from around the world.

Cardinal Bertone also praised the way the scriptwriters, Mike Rich, crafted "very beautiful dialogue" between the characters, especially in fleshing out Joseph and Mary's relationship and how "they together accepted the mystery of God's plan for them.

The film, which revives the true meaning of the season, comes at a time when "people are afraid of saying 'Merry Christmas'" and makes people "proud to say 'Merry Christmas,'" said U.S. Archbishop John P. Foley.

Pope Benedict XVI, accompanied by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone (right).

The ... Catholic News Service ... found the film to be "very moving" and thought "the part of Joseph was wonderfully scripted and played."

"In ... particular, Joseph is the ... character of love ... a moral and righteous man, who undergoes a heavenly upsetting experience" ... finding out his betrothed is pregnant ... one told "abandon himself completely to God's plan."

... L'Osservatore ... Benozzo called the film ... Mary "graceful and ... expressionless," praising it for being a "light, happy and imaginative retelling of the story of Joseph, Mary and Christ's birth.

US critic give ...

... local branding Gosh-Wagner ... homeware ... entertainment ... Washington Star said ... "dish exercise to glass gang" ... it's thought-to-tissue" network ... Jersey Society school classes."

... Boston Globe reviewer ... Bair gave it the flattest ... call ... the gentle approach "the first ... effort to ... Sitcom "Seinfeld" ... sense. "Nativity Story" ... stands that the Magi animal ... that ... of reproduction ... Kids—we'd just ... Kid. Kids ... It's ... but that ... child ... born. Mo ... He She's ... and ... sense." ...

1) Bold, bloody "Apocalypto"

LOS ANGELES—Mel Gibson ... new movie "Apocalypto" ... real good ... reviews ... Pa ... from ... who ... the ... thrilled ... against ... the ... of ... most ... civilization ... to ... bravely ... "Blood-and-gut ... action ... story ... should ... this ... down ... the ... Daily ... Stanley ... Todd ... "Apocalypto" ... authority ... to ... "Apocalypto" ... Another ... Mayan ... man's ... Pete ... Hammond ... Brothers ... "Say ... Mel ... Gibson, ... the ... pay ... love ... get ... the ... up ... screens ... it's ... modern ... "Apocalypto" ... lovely ... toward ... heroine ... Gibson's ... his ... summer ... drunken ... dumps ... Malibu, ... while ... his ... daughter, ... boyfriend ... his ... colleagues ... anti-Semitic ... against ... police ... Gibson, ... has ... apologized ... and ... industry ... watchers ... Gibson ... as ... valuable ... his ... legions ... of ... and ... the ... general ... public ... forgive ... him ... and ... will ... turn ... the ... movie's ... $ ...

"I don't ... gang ... with ... the ... audience," ... Hammond ... said.

... movie ... being ... hyped ... drubbing ... The ... Gibson's ... "martyr ... reference," ... published ... Daily ... the ... writer ... speaking ... on ... condition ... of ... language ... called "Passion ...

Gibson ... long ... making ... movie ... in ... end, ... "time ... will ... Before ... theaters ... the ... Oscar," ... Gibson, ... "Braveheart," ... another ... hit ... Dublin, ... Ireland ... many ... banks ... and ... won ... Oscars ... for ... Best ... and ... Best ... for ... Gibson. ... Reuters

Marry a Filipina, Matt told son

From page G1

from stripes?

I had never sung in public until my father died. I was asked by charity groups to give short talks about him and maybe do a song, just one song. It became a full-time engagement.

What are your fondest memories?

I was in school at the height of the crazes, but later on I went on the road with him, traveling his way, minding his wardrobe and mixer sheets. I loved watching him perform. He was a superstar, but although he was just a humble, caring man. Home never went to his head.

Maybe in the beginning it had a bit of an effect on him. But he never acted like, "Hey, I'm a star, look at me."

Your dad used to be a bus driver and really struggled to be a singer.

He recorded songs for different labels but at first he didn't sell, so they dropped him. My mom had to work while he would go on singing.

Did he like being called the British Frank Sinatra?

I think his singing was much closer to Nat King Cole. Nat Sinatra never used him as the greatest singer the world has ever seen. "That person is great. And he was my dad. Do you know that even karaoke club in the Philippines should have Matt Monro tunes?

My dad considered the Philippines his second home. He came here so many times in the '60s and '70s, performing to about 40,000 each time. He told me he felt so much warmth towards the Filipino people. An even told me, "Son, if you really want to be happy, marry a lady from the Philippines." If anyone out there is listening, I'm single!

("Matt Sings Monro" goes onstage Dec. 6 at the New Pagsar Grand Theater, Mandaluyong and Dec. 9 on the Hard Rock Cafe, Makati.)

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KAMASUTRA 3	CASINO ROYALE	REYNA	THE NATIVITY

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INANG YAYA	CASINO ROYALE	THE NATIVITY	
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(THE STAR OF "KING KONG")

KYLE GASS

TENACIOUS D
THE PICK OF DESTINY

US critics give early thumbs up, thumbs down

1) Film of Jesus' birth story no miracle, say reviewers

REVIEW

DECEMBER 6, 2006

KEISHA Castle-Hughes and Hiam Abbass in "The Nativity Story"